

The state
of
Puerto Rico

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IN THESE TIMES

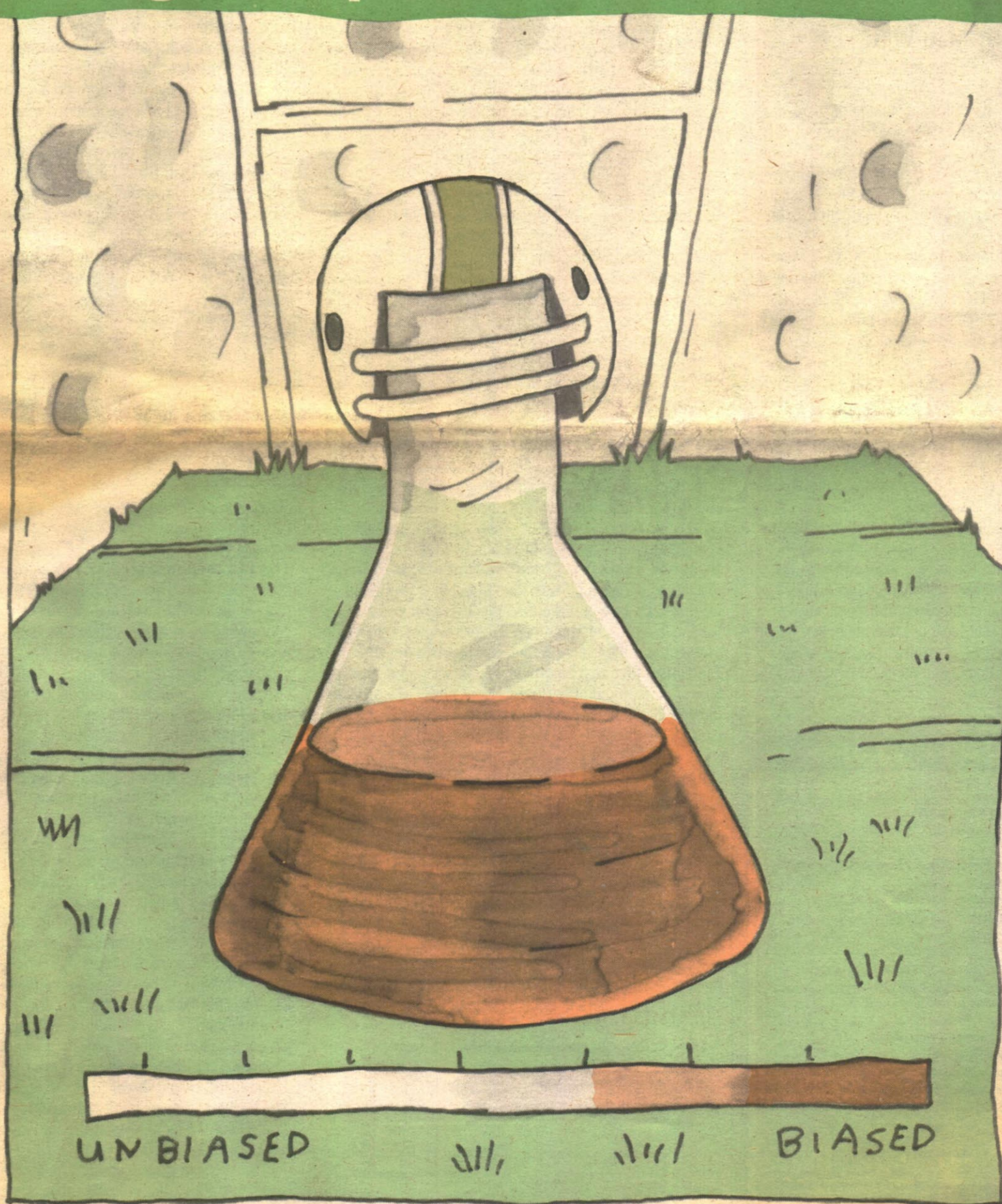
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Urine the NFL

Drug tests positive for racial bias



Salim Muwakkil reports
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PRI loyalists terrorize Mexican opposition



Mexican Ford workers demand an end to government violence against unionists.

By Matt Witt

CUAUTITLAN, MEXICO

Mexico has started the decade with a wave of violence by government loyalists against members of the democratic opposition. The violence has taken forms that have become familiar in other Latin American countries: middle-of-the-night murders or "disappearances" of opposition political activists; armed assaults against teachers, factory workers and farmworkers; vigilante attacks on journalists.

The use of violent tactics to squelch political opposition is not new in Mexico. But it intensified following the July 1988 presidential elections in which the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has ruled the country for 60 years, faced its most serious electoral challenge. Totals collected by non-government sources from precincts across the country showed that PRI's candidate, Carlos Salinas, had received only 34 percent of the vote to 39 percent for Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, leader of what has since been named the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). But PRI, which controlled the vote-counting process, announced several days after the balloting that Salinas had won with 50.1 percent. Since then, the PRD has continued to mobilize opposition to PRI's U.S.-backed economic policies, which concentrate on maintaining an attractive environment for foreign investment. Under the PRI government, Mexicans' real income has dropped by 50 percent in the past eight years, in part because of strict wage controls that have not been matched by similar restrictions on prices or profits.

While U.S. corporations have received new financial

incentives to locate operations in Mexico—the number of U.S. assembly-plant operations in Mexico is expected to double this year—the government keeps the basic wage most Mexicans receive below \$4 per day. "Labor peace" is assured through official unions that are arms of PRI rather than independent organizations, and by the existence of a huge pool of unemployed workers, whose ranks grew by 1 million in 1989 alone.

PRD supporters are also challenging the system that lets many individual PRI chieftains exercise near-total power in their communities, giving themselves government contracts, forcing the citizenry to do business at their stores and extracting bribes in return for jobs, running water, electric power, roads or other services. While the PRD organizes on the political front, workers have also responded to the economic crisis by stepping up their demand for the right to free, democratic labor unions. Traditionally, virtually all unions in Mexico have operated as affiliates of the ruling party rather than independent organizations. At the same time, Mexico's minority of indigenous peoples has challenged the PRI authorities in the countryside over land ownership, access to public services, respect for indigenous customs, an end to discrimination and other issues. Faced with this broad challenge to their power, PRI loyalists have responded in many cases with violence.

Violence against political opponents: In the month of January, PRD supporters were killed by government loyalists at a rate of more than one every other day. Documents presented by the PRD for review by the government and the United Nations show since the 1988 elections a total of 52 murders, 25 jailings and eight disappearances, in addition to dozens of physical attacks on individuals or groups of PRD supporters. Most of the recent killings were in response to efforts by PRD activists to defend apparent victories in local elections in the states of Michoacan and Guerrero in December. When PRI refused to accept apparent PRD victories in dozens of towns, PRD supporters staged sit-ins in the town halls. In many cases, PRI leaders have responded with armed attacks on PRD activists.

In one such town, the small farming community of Jungapeo in Michoacan, PRD protesters in the town hall—farmworkers with parched skin and young women with toddlers in tow—showed *In These Times* precinct-by-precinct results that confirmed their recent victory in the mayoral election. The PRI-controlled electoral commission had denied the victory by disqualifying all of the votes from the most heavily PRD precinct.

One protester explained why PRD supporters felt so strongly about defending their victory. "We have school buildings," he said, "but instead of providing teachers the government officials put the salaries in their own pockets.... The town doesn't try to create new jobs because, as long as so many people are competing for work, the landowners can go on paying us \$3.75 a day. We never felt we could do anything about these things because the government would just steal the elections. But now we've had enough."

Several weeks later, with the election dispute still unresolved, Jungapeo's electric power was cut off in the mid-

dle of the night and gunmen began shooting at PRD activists in front of the town hall. Two PRD supporters were killed. The government says that since the streetlights were out at the time of the shootings it is unlikely that those responsible can be identified.

Violence against unions: On January 8, gunmen who had been issued company identification and uniforms passed through security and entered the Ford auto factory near Mexico City. Workers there had been threatening a work stoppage to win the right to elect their own union representatives instead of having leaders imposed by the government-sanctioned Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) and to obtain required benefits that Ford, with union collaboration, had decided not to pay. The gunmen opened fire on the unarmed workers, killing one and wounding seven others. By capturing three of the gunmen, who gave details about who they worked for, the Ford workers established that the assault had been organized by the official union leadership. After the three were turned over to police, it was the CTM that provided their bail and legal defense.

Another target of violence against unionists, as in other Latin American countries, has been Mexico's teachers, perhaps because they have the ability to provide communities with skills that can be used to organize for justice and democracy. With more than a million members, the Mexican teachers' organization is the largest labor union in Latin America. But the relationship between top union officials and the government is so close that union members risk their lives if they organize for union democracy, for raises above the current average salary of \$200 per month or for a reversal of the substantial cuts in real spending on education imposed in the '80s.

A report by opponents of the government-supported union leadership charges that more than 100 teacher

INSIDE STORY

activists have been killed in recent years in the state of Oaxaca alone, with virtually none of the killers being brought to justice.

The PRI response: During a recent news conference, PRI spokesman Javier Lopez Moreno expressed concern that while violent incidents may occur as local elections continue to be held throughout the nation, these not be allowed to affect Mexico's international image that is crucial in attracting foreign investment. The murders of PRD supporters, he said, are local actions of individuals—actions for which the PRD itself is responsible because of the "illegal" sit-ins it has conducted.

While the government rejects responsibility for increasing violence, its leaders have in other public statements repeatedly promised action on some of its root causes. Promises to "modernize" Mexico have included pledges to allow a more open electoral system, control corruption and discrimination, remove obstacles to independent unionism and use social resources to help those in need. Whether those promises are carried out—and whether Mexico develops an economic policy that addresses the desperation of the great majority of its citizens—obviously will have a great effect on Americans as well as Mexicans. With millions of people already crossing the 2,000-mile border between the two countries each year, a Central American-style spiral of escalating death-squad violence and even all-out war, fueled by continued economic hardship, would surely spread to the U.S. side. A real or perceived threat to U.S. economic interests, which are far greater in Mexico than in Central America, would likely bring an even more massive U.S. military response.

"The Mexican people are determined to solve their problem through the political process," said a PRD leader in the state of Morelos. "I am afraid—very afraid—of what will happen if the government closes off that option."

Matt Witt is a correspondent based in Mexico.

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By David Moberg

IN THE ONGOING POLITICAL FLAP OVER THE PROPOSAL of Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) to cut Social Security taxes, one question stands out: is anyone prepared to make federal government finances progressive?

"Progressive" means taxing the rich—the beneficiaries of many years of tax cuts—according to their ability to pay while using federal funds to create a healthier overall economy and to protect individuals' well-being according to their needs.

If the Democrats seize the opportunity, they could bring many middle-class voters back into their fold and re-establish their most potent, if enfeebled, political claim—that they stand for the average working family and not for the rich. That requires doing more than cutting Social Security taxes. But few Democratic leaders have joined Moynihan's ranks, and the prospects for broader Democratic initiative seem dim.

Moynihan's proposal was spurred by a simple though outrageous move by the Bush administration. Despite Bush's lips, on January 1 taxes on working people increased by \$13 billion as Social Security's take from wages rose from 7.15 percent to 7.65 percent. Although the federal budget deficit, not counting Social Security, continues to grow steadily, the overall deficit has declined because of the rising Social Security surplus.

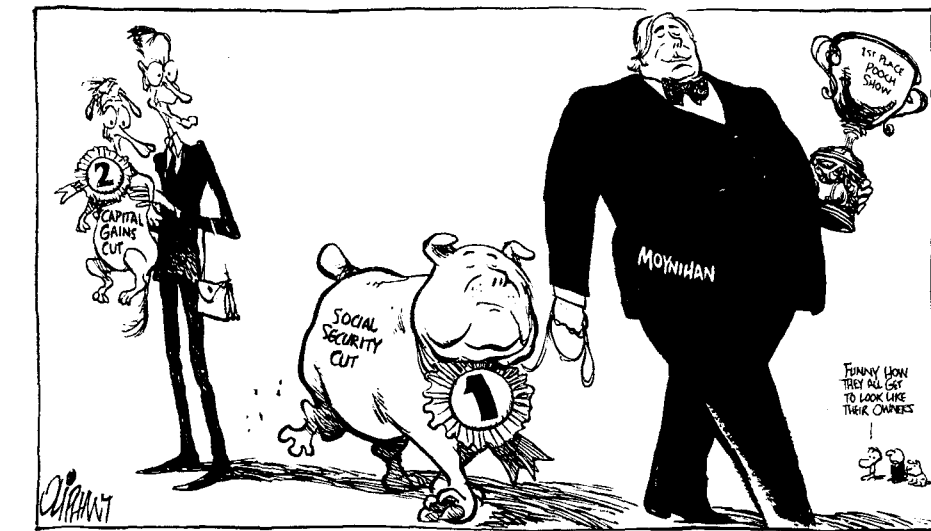
If one counts benefits as well as taxes, the Social Security system is, in fact, progressive. People receive Social Security benefits partly based on what they've paid in, but the system also replaces a higher percentage of earnings for the poor than for the wealthy. Ideally, everyone benefits but the poor benefit most.

Alone, however, Social Security taxes are regressive: the same flat rate applies to everyone—but only up to \$51,300 in earnings. So the very well-off pay the lowest rates. These regressive taxes now support a growing portion of the military, wealthy bondholders' interests and the rest of the government.

Fooled by the bill: Most people think their Social Security payments go into a trust fund to benefit them in their old age or to pay for Medicare or disability and benefits for surviving spouses and children. But Social Security always has operated as a "pay as you go" system: today's taxes go to today's beneficiaries. After years of income stagnation and inflation, Social Security finances seemed insecure in the deep recession of the early '80s. A 1983 bipartisan compromise imposed modest cuts and new or accelerated revenue collection to make Social Security solvent throughout this decade and to build surpluses that could guarantee benefits through the middle of the next century.

But what happens to this "surplus" that's expected to reach \$4.5 trillion by 2010? Currently the trust funds are used to purchase special Treasury securities, which reduce the deficit and supposedly constitute a claim on future government revenue. But where will the money come from to honor that claim? Future taxes.

"The [trust] fund is mythical," explains Robert Eisner, Northwestern University economist and budget expert. "There are no dollars sitting there. It's an accounting trick. The real problem for Social Security is simply the productivity of the country at the



Sen. Moynihan's proposal sparks social insecurity

time retirees are getting benefits and the willingness of the country to pay for the benefits."

The complications of Social Security financing are not only political but psychological as well. The separate tax, the trust funds and the surplus all are part of an elaborate ritual designed to convince people that the system is sound, that it is not "welfare," and that they have earned their share of this universal benefit. In the end, however, Social Security becomes just another part of the budget. Moynihan has acknowledged the need for a reserve equal to one year's Social Security payouts to cover fluctuations in the economy. While others argue that tax rates should remain constant to cover Medicare's impending crunch, a national health-care system would better cure Medicare's ills. But the real guarantee of the system lies in popular support.

Battling the Bush league: Bush and the Republicans would like to retain the Social Security surplus as a growing tax that reduces deficits and exempts the rich. Some Social Security experts defend the surplus but want to stop using it to finance the government. They would rather raise other taxes to balance the budget and use the surplus to buy outstanding government debt, shifting to the trust funds Treasury bonds now held by private individuals and institutions—a strategy which supposedly would unleash private savings for investment now tied up in government debt.

But reducing the debt, especially if the Federal Reserve monetary policy wasn't relaxed, could dangerously dampen the economy by constricting overall demand. In any case, more savings do not automatically lead to new investment without adequate demand for whatever businesses produce. Although infrequently noted, the current economic expansion has been stimulated by demand generated by big deficits. If a stronger economy is the real guarantee for Social Security, then the government should be investing in basic capital infrastructure (such as roads, bridges or mass transit), the environment, low-income housing and education, argue liberal economists like Northwestern's Eisner and Jeff Faux, director of

the Washington-based Economic Policy Institute. Although Social Security surpluses could be earmarked for such social investments in productivity, nothing but a political gimmick would be gained by using Social Security funds rather than general government revenues.

Better that the federal budget should be divided between a capital budget—which would acknowledge the legitimacy of borrowing for long-term investment—and a balanced operating budget with a surplus reserve during times of full employment.

The only way the Social Security surplus could produce real returns to pay future benefits is if it were invested in ongoing business enterprises, as are private pension funds. Freed from petty political pressures, professional managers could run such a public fund as well as any private pension or mutual

Is anyone prepared to make federal government finances progressive?

fund—perhaps better, by pursuing a longer-run investment strategy. But this alternative is unthinkingly dismissed as "socialism," just as it was when Franklin Roosevelt's advisers first proposed it in 1935.

Conservatives like Rep. John Porter (R-IL) now see a chance to dismantle Social Security and replace it with new individual retirement accounts funded by the surplus, which would wipe out Social Security's original progressive, redistributive mission. Also, as Merton Bernstein, principal consultant to the National Commission on Social Security Reform, and co-author Joan Bernstein, argue in *Social Security: The System That Works*, such private retirement plans are riskier and less comprehensive than Social Security.

The Social Security debate highlights the way in which "the progressivity of the U.S. tax system—never very pronounced ... has been declining for more than two decades," as was argued last year by the late Joseph Pechman of the Brookings Institution.

Former President Ronald Reagan's tax policies worsened already rising inequalities in pre-tax income and wealth during the '80s. The top one percent of families received about nine percent of tax-reported income from 1952 to 1981, Pechman reported, but by 1986 their share had risen to 14.7 percent. Social Security tax increases consumed most people's modest income-tax cuts, and the 1986 tax reform did little to restore progressivity.

Is there a Robin Hood in the house?

Now Bush wants to overturn one of the few progressive accomplishments of that 1986 reform: treating capital gains as ordinary income. According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, Bush's capital gains cuts—unfortunately embraced by many Democrats—would grant an average of \$25,000 to each of the 376,000 richest people in the U.S. but less than \$20 to each average family making \$50,000 or less. Moynihan's plan would make it harder for such tax breaks for the rich to pass if Congress refuses to reduce workers' Social Security taxes.

The Democrats have accepted many of the backdrop arguments for this debate: deficits must be cut deeply, neither tax increases on the rich nor closing \$45 billion in annual corporate loopholes can be tolerated, and private savings must be increased.

But as Robert Blecker of the Economic Policy Institute notes, about the same percentage of the gross national product has gone into gross private savings in the '80s as in the previous two decades. With nearly \$1 trillion available for corporate takeovers and restructurings during the past decade, U.S. corporations haven't wanted for cash even though they haven't been making the long-term investments the country needs. There is no clear evidence as to which government policies encourage savings, and more savings alone won't necessarily generate productive investment. As David Aschauer of the Chicago Federal Reserve has argued, public infrastructure investment would now increase profits even more than private investment in new facilities.

Moynihan scores valuable points in his role as the political opposition as his tax-cut proposal puts the heat on Bush. Many Democrats, worried about deficits, feel they must offer an alternative to Bush's budget but don't want the political liability of advocating new taxes. They should, argues the Economic Policy Institute's Faux, be trading off the payroll tax for a more progressive income tax. "But I despair of the Democratic Party coming up with that," he adds. Indeed, Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) promptly undercut Moynihan's message by calling for a regressive national sales tax. Many liberals fear a social security tax cut, linked with Gramm-Rudman deficit constraints and no new tax, would simply lead to further budget pressure on domestic programs.

Moynihan has precipitated, argues Faux, a useful but unnecessarily complex debate over two rather simple questions. Where should the government get revenue, and what should it spend it on? The liberal answer is clear: first, close loopholes and make income taxes more progressive; second, spend to reduce inequality, educate and retrain workers, care for the needy and rebuild the economy. This should be the Democrats' tune, but many of them apparently march to a different drummer.

INSHORT

By Joel Bleifuss

John Hull accused of murder

Earlier this month a Costa Rican judge signed an order asking the U.S. to extradite Iran-contra figure John Hull to face charges of violating Costa Rican neutrality. The order must be approved by Costa Rica's highest court before it is delivered to the U.S. Embassy. Further, in December, a Costa Rican government prosecutor, Jorge Chavarria, recommended that the "rancher," who holds both U.S. and Costa Rican passports and currently lives in Indiana, be indicted for the May 30, 1984, murders of three journalists. Linda Frazier of the U.S. and Jorge Quiros and Evelio Sequeira, both of Costa Rica, were killed when a bomb exploded at a press conference being given by contra leader Eden Pastora in La Penca, Nicaragua. The prosecutor's report, based on a six-month investigation by the Judicial Investigation Organization (OIJ), the Costa Rican FBI, supports the central allegations of the Christic Institute's 1986 civil racketeering suit against Hull and 28 others, including Oliver North's courier Robert Owen (who first met Hull while employed as an aide to former Indiana Sen. Dan Quayle), arms dealer Richard Secord and retired Gen. John Singlaub, the former head of the World Anti-Communist League. The Christic case was dismissed by a Miami federal judge in June 1988 due to "lack of evidence," a decision that is being appealed. Hull operated as a civilian commander in the Reagan administration's war against Nicaragua. He was also a double dipper for the contra cause. From 1982 to 1986 he was a CIA employee, and from October 1984 to September 1985 Oliver North paid him \$10,000 a month to provide "humanitarian assistance" to the contras fighting in southern Nicaragua. Based out of his 5,000-acre ranch in northern Costa Rica, Hull helped manage the contra resupply effort—an effort financed in part by turning the ranch with its six airplane runways into a transit station for the Medellin cartel. It is alleged that the contra supply planes would arrive from the U.S. with guns and returned laden with cocaine.

The plot sickens: The Costa Rican judicial investigation provides further information about how the La Penca bombing was planned, carried out and then covered up. According to the report, contra commander Pastora became a target because he refused to integrate his forces, the ARDE (Democratic Revolutionary Alliance), into the CIA-backed FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force). He did not want to associate with the the former Somocistas who controlled the FDN, and he was firmly opposed to the contra drug operation. The report states, "Between mid-1983 and 1984, Hull became Pastora's principal opponent, backed by Oliver North, the FDN, Adolfo Calero, the Cubans and the narco-traffickers." According to the report, Hull and Costa Rican security officials, some of whom were CIA employees, met several times to discuss the need to "eliminate" Pastora. Further, and perhaps not coincidentally, on the day of the bombing, Hull left his ranch and flew to San Jose, Costa Rica. There he met in a CIA safe house with Robert Owen, CIA Costa Rica station chief Phil Holtz and several pilots for the contra's Southern Front. It is also known that soon after the bombing, Hull called a former business partner who lived near the border and told him not to use his plane to transport the bombing victims to hospitals. The next morning, Owen left for Tegucigalpa.

If at first you don't succeed...: Jack Terrell, a former mercenary who is cooperating with the investigation into the La Penca bombing, testified before the Fourth Trial Court in San Jose that the plans to kill Pastora did not end with that failed assassination attempt. Terrell related the following story, and it was reported in the OIJ report this way: "After the bombing, in December 1984, at a meeting in the Shamrock Hilton Hotel in Houston, John Hull, who was accompanied by Robert Owen, told Terrell that Eden Pastora was a communist and had become a problem for them in consolidating the Southern Front. For that reason he had to be killed. This viewpoint was discussed in a second meeting three days later in Miami. Those present at that meeting included, among others, UNO [United Nicaraguan Opposition] leader Adolfo Calero, FDN commander Enrique Bermudez, Robert Owen and John Hull. Also present was a person introduced as Amac Galil. Adolfo Calero, speaking of the need to unify the Southern Front and the obstacle that Pastora represented, pointed to Hull and told him that [Pastora] had to be eliminated. At this moment Felipe Vidal turned toward Hull and said that they had placed the bomb to kill Pastora but that it had been de-



A Wisconsin law professor, ROTC cadet and gay-rights activist listen as school officials debate banning the ROTC.

Gays fight for membership in a campus club that won't have them

MADISON, WIS.—After a setback in the impassioned struggle to oust the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) from the University of Wisconsin for its anti-gay discrimination, activists are grappling with some familiar problems of building a progressive coalition.

The university's board of regents rejected a proposal on February 2 that would have suspended the ROTC in 1993 unless a federal policy that bars lesbians and gay men from serving in the military is changed.

Although the proposal captured national media attention when the Wisconsin faculty endorsed it in December, the board's 13-3 vote will confine university efforts against discrimination to a lobbying campaign targeted at Congress and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The vote comes only three years after the board acknowledged that the ROTC violated university policies as well as the state's pioneering law banning discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

Most university officials, including Chancellor Donna E. Shalala, say they oppose the military's anti-gay policy, which stems from a Defense Department directive that says the presence of lesbians and gay men in the armed forces "adversely affects ... discipline, good order and morale." But Shalala and others urged the board to retain the program because, they said, a suspension would hurt the university's ability to "work within the system" for a policy change.

Many observers suspect the chancellor was also concerned about the \$1.5 million the ROTC pumps into Madison's economy as well as the possible loss of federal research grants and the rumored closing of a

military installation in central Wisconsin.

"When the principle of non-discrimination was put up against material considerations, there was no contest," says Jordan Marsh, university affairs director of the Wisconsin Student Association and senior class president.

Marsh and other student activists have renewed a decades-old war against the ROTC on U.S. campuses. Since 1916, when the program was created to recruit and train officers for World War I, campus campaigns have amplified a variety of anti-militarist concerns, including the low academic credentials of most ROTC instructors, the military's philosophical opposition to critical inquiry and the role of universities in supporting imperialist U.S. foreign policy.

During the Vietnam War students succeeded in forcing administrators to expel the ROTC from several universities, including Yale and Harvard. The hot spots of today's movement are at Wisconsin, Yale, the University of Minnesota, Dartmouth University, the University of Iowa, the University of California-Los Angeles and Northwestern University.

Many leaders in the movement have publicly distanced themselves from anti-ROTC activism of generations past. The current wisdom is summed up by Dave Wilcox, co-president of the 10% Society, Madison's lesbian and gay student organization: "We have nothing against the ROTC on campus—provided they don't discriminate. It's not about militarism like it was in the '60s."

Michael Olneck, professor of educational policy studies and sociology, goes even further, describing the anti-ROTC coalition as a delicate force that agrees only on the principle of non-discrimination. "Attempts to identify us with past anti-ROTC movements would be mistaken and would contribute to our defeat," he says.

ROTC sympathizers, for their part, have effectively manipulated these

tactics. Law professor Gordon Baldwin, the faculty's official ROTC liaison, has sounded an accusation strangely reminiscent of a former Wisconsin senator. Just after the faculty vote in December, Baldwin told local news cameras that the proposal was endorsed by people with hidden agendas against the ROTC instead of a concern for lesbian and gay rights.

This sort of baiting rings uncomfortably clear for those anti-ROTC activists who have accepted the unsavory challenge of fighting for equal access to an institution whose very existence they deeply oppose.

Philosophy Ph.D. candidate John Fields, a gay activist and editor of the leftist biweekly *The Madison In-surgent*, identifies the problem of opposing both discrimination and militarism as the "balancing act of coalition politics." Fields, however, has chosen not to organize around the ROTC issue because he fears such work would compromise his integrity.

Others are more willing to dirty their hands. "Deciding not to oppose discrimination because I oppose the military would be a less-ethical position than opposing discrimination wherever it occurs, even in the military," says Joseph Elder, professor of sociology and South Asian studies.

Claudia Card, professor of philosophy and women's studies, adds that gay men have always served in the military by lying about their sexual orientation.

Despite the board's vote to retain the ROTC, activists have promised that the struggle is just beginning. Their immediate tasks include monitoring university lobbying efforts and networking with other campuses.

And, Regent Obert J. Vattendahl promises, an ROTC suspension resolution will come before the board in one year if the university has made no progress against the discrimination.

—Chip Mitchell

Cristiani tries PR push to head off hard times

WASHINGTON, DC—Pity poor Alfredo Cristiani.

The president of El Salvador is having trouble restarting peace talks with the anti-government Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). He's also facing increased skepticism from members of the U.S. Congress—his most reliable bankers—still shaken by the slaying of six Jesuit priests and two household members in El Salvador last November.

And to make matters worse, the Salvadoran leader was repeatedly harangued by demonstrators earlier this month during a brief U.S. visit aimed at drumming up support.

The official purpose of the U.S. junket, Cristiani said in a February 2 speech at the National Press Club, was to persuade U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to participate in the Salvadoran peace process. But beneath the formal sheen

of Cristiani's mission was a deeper message: don't cut U.S. aid to El Salvador. Cristiani has become accustomed to the U.S. outpouring, which has topped \$4.4 billion over the past decade.

In his National Press Club appearance and meetings with reporters elsewhere, Cristiani said that reduced aid would constitute a "negative signal" allowing both leftist and conservative forces in his country to handcuff the peace process.

"We feel that it would be a shame to give both the extreme right and the extreme left, especially in El Salvador, a negative sign with respect to support for what the Salvadoran government is doing," he said. "Any change in the status of the aid would certainly be a negative sign that would probably place in the minds of extremists more militaristic ideas and political ideas."

The importance of the public relations gambit was not lost on Cristiani, as he repeated it in Spanish when questioned by Spanish-language media. And after a White House meeting with President George Bush

the day before, Cristiani told reporters much the same thing.

The U.S. visit came as both the Bush administration and congressional leaders are considering a cut in aid to El Salvador of about 28 percent, or \$50 million. At the same time, Cristiani's facade has been tarnished by the Jesuit deaths, despite the arrests last month of eight soldiers believed to be involved in the killings.

In support of the investigation into the slayings Cristiani said: "There has been some speculation with respect to that case and its resolution. We are not here to do justice by using scapegoats or going by speculation. We can only rely on what the FBI ... and Scotland Yard have called a very professional investigation. We will only go by the results of a professional investigation."

Meanwhile, Cristiani faces economic troubles at home and pressure from right-wing hard-liners in his Nationalist Republican Alliance party who believe that the U.S. focus on human rights unjustly encroaches on internal matters.

The times are getting tough.

—Jon Gardner

Cold War mentality pervades Swiss Federal Police

The Swiss Federal Police force has not been using its time wisely.

Since World War II, the Federal Police (FP)—which functions as a state security and counterespionage force—has secretly assembled 900,000 files on individuals, organizations, political parties, movements and events, including a continually updated list of the dead members of Switzerland's small Communist Party, it was recently reported.

Most of the individuals and organizations have ties with environmentalist, feminist, anti-nuclear and anti-militarist movements and include many social-democratic and Green members of parliament. At the same time, it was found, the FP ignored the growing money-laundering schemes conducted through Swiss banks and financial institutions as well as the increasing threat posed by xenophobic and right-wing extremist groups in Switzerland.

This shocking discovery was made unexpectedly last year by a parliamentary committee investigating an unrelated scandal. During the investigation the committee found that the FP conducted a massive political surveillance operation with no apparent oversight from the ruling coalition government, and that the FP's longtime head, Solicitor General Rudolf Gerber, repeatedly lied to his superiors about his political witch hunts.

The committee also found that the FP maintained close working relationships with foreign intelligence agencies—including Israel's Mossad and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration—without proper authorization. It also appears that the Swiss

Cabinet, or Bundesrat, tolerated—or even condoned—the FP's activities.

Moritz Leuenberger, the chair of the investigative committee and himself a target of FP snooping, called the activities of the FP a threat to Swiss democracy and demanded major changes in the organization.

"People who want to change and improve our system by democratic means are being portrayed as enemies of the state and pursued," he said. "This is intolerable. One of the fundamental pillars of our state is being undermined by its own security organs." Leuenberger and his committee also criticized the "Cold War mentality" that guided the FP's political snooping.

As is usually the case in such massive political surveillance and intimidation operations, carelessness, mistakes and absurdity abound. Leuenberger's committee found that likely targets for investigation included anyone who participated in demonstrations that the FP considered "left"—like anti-Vietnam, anti-nuclear or pro-disarmament protests.

The FP also apparently investigated ordinary citizens for such suspicious acts as signing petitions and referenda asking for changes in established political practices. Conscientious objectors and their supporters made the files as well as Swiss tourists visiting Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. People who had contacts with embassy personnel from Eastern bloc countries were equally suspect.

That's how Massimo Pini, a Conservative member of parliament, got into the files. As a member of the European Council in Strassburg, Pini worked with the Soviet Embassy in Bern to arrange a visit of Soviet parliamentarians. Pini's actions got him labeled a "subversive."

Inclusion in the FP's files often

proved harmful to an individual. The investigative committee found instances in which people lost their jobs, were passed over for promotions, were not hired or were otherwise discredited. The FP passed on its information—which was often based on unsubstantiated charges, hearsay or even lies—to the security services of big corporations as well as foreign intelligence services.

But while the FP investigated the activities of ordinary citizens it ignored the doings of right-wing extremist groups and turned a blind eye to the growing use of Switzerland as a haven for money launderers.

Gerber and his surrogates routinely approved entrance and residence visas for known drug-money launderers from abroad. In 1982, the FP allowed Klaus Barbie, the infamous "Butcher of Lyons," to buy airplanes in Switzerland with money from the drug-infested Bolivian government.

Incredibly enough, however, the parliamentary committee found that Gerber had not investigated Switzerland's Patriotic Front, a group that has increasingly advocated the use of violence against foreign refugees, especially dark-skinned Turks, Sri Lankans, Kurds and Zairians.

The Swiss parliament is now preparing legislation to bring the FP under parliamentary control. The legislation would open the FP's files and separate the positions of solicitor general and head of the FP. Although members of the Bundesrat claim the reforms go too far, parliament is likely to prevail.

But, as one commentator wrote in the Zurich daily *Tages-Anzeiger*, Swiss officials must change not only bureaucratic structures but the whole anti-democratic Cold War mentality pervading the executive bureaucracy in Bern.

—Reto Pieth

tonated ahead of time. Hull assented with a nod. At this same gathering, over lunch, Vidal told Terrell that Galil carried the bomb to Pastora's camp in a metallic box, that the bomb was made up of C-4 plastic explosive and that it was operated by remote control. He also said that Galil went out of the press conference to urinate and had been surprised by a Pastora security guard. So, thinking he had been discovered, Galil detonated the bomb." As the meeting continued, those present discussed plans to dress 30 contras up as Sandinista soldiers. Those faux Sandinistas would kidnap Pastora, publicly hang him in El Castillo, Nicaragua, and then retreat across the border to Hull's ranch, where they would burn their uniforms, before flying back to their contra base camps in Honduras.

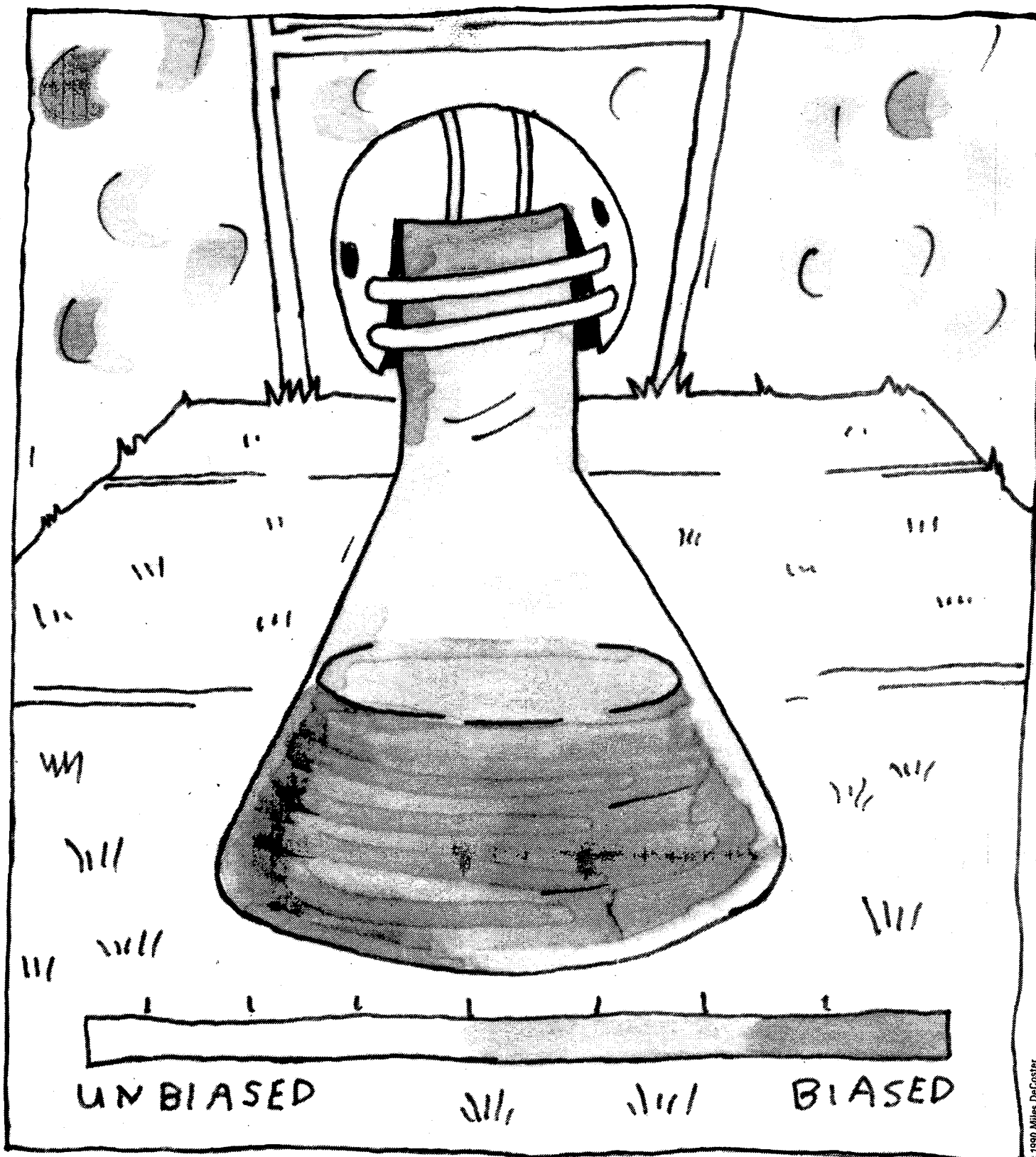
Hull today, gone tomorrow: The 70-year-old Hull, one of the most slippery Iran-contras figures, has a knack for staying a step ahead of the law. In the spring of 1986, then-Attorney General Edwin Meese personally derailed the request by U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Feldman that a grand jury be convened to investigate Hull and "criminal activities including gun-running and Neutrality Act violations." In 1987 the Senate subcommittee on terrorism, narcotics and international operations, headed by Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), subpoenaed Hull, but he was in Costa Rica and the subpoena could not be served. Last week, Jonathan Winer, counsel to Sen. Kerry, told *In These Times*, "The subcommittee is continuing its investigation into the links between drug trafficking, law enforcement and foreign policy and retains an active interest in Hull." In January 1989, Hull was arrested in Costa Rica and charged with drug trafficking and neutrality-law violations. On July 18, 1989, shortly before his case was scheduled to go to trial, Hull jumped bail in Costa Rica and turned up at his family farm near Patoka, Ind.

A man with a mission: When asked of the charges against him, Hull told *In These Times*: "It's pretty simple. It's just a case of those particular authorities in Costa Rica who are on the left being manipulated by the left. This whole thing has been fabricated by those reporters, Martha Honey and Tony Avirgan, and the Christic Institute. The communists [with their lawsuits] have set out to break me financially and, of course, they have done that. You reach the point where you don't have the money to defend yourself." Hull has remained in Indiana, except for three weeks in January when he went on a "humanitarian missionary trip" to El Salvador to arrange for 60,000 Bibles to be sent to the Salvadoran military, which for the first time is setting up a chaplaincy.

For shame: Tony Avirgan, the ABC cameraman who was wounded in the La Penca bombing and who, with his wife Martha Honey, is a plaintiff in the Christic Institute suit, feels vindicated by the Costa Rican investigation. Speaking from his home in San Jose, he told *In These Times*: "We were very pleased to see that the independent investigation that was run by the Costa Rican police, although tardy, was a verification of what we had found several years ago. And they went beyond our investigation; they have more sources. But I don't think this inquiry is sufficient. Costa Rica has to continue the process and make sure that people are brought to justice. This tiny country is putting the U.S. to shame. Costa Rica has had the courage to tackle this uncomfortable issue in a way that the U.S. Congress, the courts and certainly the Justice Department have not been able to."

Doo do do doo, doo do do doo...

Science for the People is giving the 1990 "Welcome to the Twilight Zone" award for the most ridiculous U.S. Defense Department project to the "Island Sun" program. The *Philadelphia Inquirer's* Tim Weiner first brought the program to light in his 1987 Pulitzer Prize-winning series titled "The Pentagon's Secret Cache." Island Sun is a nuclear-war contingency plan to deploy a convoy of lead-lined tractor-trailer trucks containing a cargo of the nation's top military officials. Like miniature Pentagons on wheels, the trucks would roam the nation's highways launching whatever is left of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The trucks would, in theory, continue to function months after the Pentagon, the White House and everyone else in America are destroyed. In his 1991 budget, President Bush is proposing to increase funding for Island Sun to \$84.6 million, a 46 percent increase over 1990. Further, authority for the program is being transferred from the Defense Communications Agency to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, those same fighting men who, if everything goes according to plans, will spend World War III trucking down your local interstate.



The Boston-based center has earned a reputation for top-rate research in areas where race and sports intersect. It has been foremost in documenting the "positional segregation"—placing white athletes into "thinking" positions and blacks into "instinctive" ones—that is common in U.S. athletics.

"Our research at the center has persuasively demonstrated that racism pervades sports just as it does every other sector of this society," Farrell noted. "And I've found that stark racial disparities are generally indications of stark racism." He condemned as racist the argument—and the NFL's rationale—that black athletes are busted more for drugs because they use drugs disproportionately.

The sports divide: Yet one former black member of the Houston Oilers who requested anonymity is not so contemptuous of that argument. "It seems true to me that young black players are more attracted to drugs like marijuana and cocaine, while white players seem to be attracted more to alcohol and macho drugs like steroids," he added, offering anecdotal support for what

Drug testing is narrowing the scope of civil liberties in this country.

seems to be a growing perception—Farrell's complaints notwithstanding. African-American athletes, like their counterparts in society at large, seem especially vulnerable to the attraction of socially acceptable drugs.

That notion of social acceptability is key. Big-time professional athletics in this country is a complex social arrangement. At the top is an overwhelmingly white male power structure concerned with maximizing profit. Since the sporting press depends on this structure's public-relations machine for access, and thus its own existence, there is no mystery where its loyalties lie. This monied and influential institution is rapidly achieving new social stature.

The athletes, on the other hand, are often from a racial culture with values and peer pressures that are incomprehensible to those in charge. In addition, many of the black athletes have been deeply scarred by impoverished childhoods. The indulgences afforded by huge sports salaries must be doubly enticing to young men conditioned by lives of lack.

"You've got these psychologically immature kids involved in high-tension competitive activities at a fever pitch," said Nebraska state Sen. Ernest Chambers. "What do you expect?"

Although he's a state legislator, Chambers has a national reputation as an advocate for athletes. He is the prime mover of the newly respectable argument that advocates financial compensation for collegiate student/athletes.

"Most professional athletes demonstrate their talent at an early age, so their psychological development is retarded while they are shepherded through life by various coaches and athletic directors," Chambers said. "Naturally, when they are out on their own, they find it difficult to handle the ups

Continued on page 10

NFL creates tempest in a pee pot

By Salim Muwakkil

WHEN WJLA-TV IN WASHINGTON, D.C., aired charges that professional football's drug-testing program was both unreliable and racist, it rekindled a smoldering controversy. In a two-part series reported by Roberta Baskin, the station alleged that Dr. Forest Tennant, drug adviser of the National Football League (NFL), regularly breached confidentiality and failed to follow proper procedures in overseeing the league's testing program. These accusations echo those made by *Sports Illustrated* in a July 10, 1989, story on the NFL's Tennant. But the TV report also charged that the NFL is racially selective in enforcement of its drug policy.

The story aired just four days before the January 28 Super Bowl, so it easily captured the attention of a sports media already gagging on pre-game hype. Baskin increased the report's news value with the startling news that the NFL had ignored positive drug-test

results of three "star" white quarterbacks while specifically targeting some black troublemakers it wanted to oust through testing.

The issue dominated the maiden news conference of newly appointed NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, who called the report

RACISM

"a smear." Eager to cast his new leadership in an aggressive mold, Tagliabue angrily denounced the WJLA investigation as "a journalistic Molotov cocktail" that "took two of the most volatile issues in America—racism and drugs—and mixed them up with innuendo, distortion and absence of facts and throws it against the wall."

NFL clout: In a counterattack almost as lopsided as the Super Bowl itself, the NFL began exercising its media clout and went on the offensive against what it called "the lowest-rated station in Washington, D.C." It questioned the timing of WJLA's report and

cast aspersions on the station's sources. All too typically, the media generally bought the NFL's version of the story. Few reporters followed Baskin's lead, and a veil of disinterest soon settled on the story.

But many observers familiar with professional athletics in this country insist that the issues of drugs and race were mixed long before a Washington TV station disclosed the connection. "There's little doubt in my mind that the [WJLA] report is right about racial bias in drug testing," said Charles Farrell, special projects coordinator at Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sports in Society.

"All you have to do is look around professional sports to see who's being suspended for drug use and it becomes very clear that racism is involved," Farrell added. Of the 30 NFL players suspended for drug use, 26 have been African-American. Black football players make up about 56 percent of the total NFL roster, Farrell said, "so the disparities in who gets drug suspensions are obvious."

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

LAST YEAR, *THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY MAGAZINE* featured a full-page ad that under a photo of a butterfly declared, "We profit by protecting the environment." Under the headline, the text concluded, "For Waste Management, recycling and making room for butterflies are part of the solution. And just good business."

This ad was part of a four-year-old public-relations campaign by Waste Management, the Oak Brook, Ill.-based garbage giant whose image has been tarnished over the last decade by lawsuits and fines. The ad

ENVIRONMENT

campaign portrays Waste Management as a friend rather than a foe of the environment.

To clean up its image, the firm has also been funding the environmental movement itself. A Waste Management spokesman insists that its support comes "without strings attached," but some environmentalists charge that Waste Management is trying to influence the very organizations that have been its most active adversaries. "They are trying to buy credibility and influence," says Brian Lipsett, of the Citizens Clearinghouse on Hazardous Waste.

If Waste Management is in fact trying to buy influence, it may be succeeding. Many of the major environmental lobbies and policy groups have accepted funding from the firm, and Waste Management is now a member of an influential new organization of environmental funders that promises to play a leading role in the environmental movement of the future.

Champion polluter: Founded in 1968 by Chicagoan Dean Buntrock, Waste Management is now the largest garbage company in the world, with sites in the U.S., South America, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Europe. Along with Browning-Ferris Industries, it accounts for about 20 percent of the nation's private garbage collection and waste disposal, and its annual revenues run more than \$4.4 billion.

Since the early '80s, it also has been the firm most frequently charged with and sued for toxic-waste violations. The federal government and a number of states have cited the industrial giant with more than 500 violations. Last May, for instance, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) fined a Chicago Waste Management subsidiary \$4.5 million for improperly burning hazardous waste, causing carcinogenic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) to waft into the city's Southeast Side.

Several states have also accused the company of price fixing and bribery. Last March, for example, Waste Management's California subsidiary pleaded no contest in the largest anti-trust case in California history. And in January 1988, a Florida subsidiary was fined \$1 million for price fixing.

To counteract this negative publicity, the firm kicked off the major public-relations effort in the mid-'80s with a multimillion-dollar TV ad campaign. At about the same time, it began funding environmental groups. From 1987 through 1988, it gave grants to 33 different organizations. During the first three quarters of 1989, Waste Management gave grants to 15 different environmental groups, including the following:

- \$50,000 to World Wildlife and the Conservation Foundation;
- \$40,000 to the National Wildlife Federation;
- \$50,000 to the National Audubon Society;

Waste Management: going environmental?

- \$40,000 to the Environmental Law Institute;

- \$15,000 to INFORM; and

- \$10,000 to the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The organizations claim they are not compromised by these contributions. Brian Day, a spokesman for EPA Administrator William Reilly's former organization, World Wildlife and the Conservation Foundation, says that the organization "does not automatically reject contributions from corporations which have environmental problems." Day claims that World Wildlife retains "total control" over its projects, but he acknowledges that Waste Management's grant was the largest corporate contribution that the organization received last year.

Mia Finemann, the communications director of INFORM, a New York-based research group that has funded studies on toxic wastes, maintains that accepting grants from Waste Management does not create even an appearance of impropriety. "We insist on maintaining our independent research role," she says.

The National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) received a Waste Management grant when, after the death of an environmentalist,

his parents solicited the corporation's help in funding an NRDC internship in his name. According to a source who requested anonymity, NRDC felt that, under the circumstances, it could not turn down the grant, but there has been considerable grumbling within the organization. "It's a real dilemma to us here," says Jack Murray, director of development.

Other organizations, however, such as the Citizens Clearinghouse on Hazardous Waste, have chosen not to accept Waste Management grants. The clearinghouse's Lipsett says, "We won't take the money because we work with so many people who are fighting them."

Split over membership: In 1988, Waste Management was invited to become a member of a loose-knit organization of environmental funders who met annually to discuss funding priorities. When Waste Management sent a representative to the organization's January 1989 meeting in Princeton, N.J., one participant told *In These Times* that "only a handful" of the 80 or 90 people in attendance protested Waste Management's participation in the meeting.

Last summer, the group decided to become a more conventional organization,

called the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), that would have a formal structure and "mission statement." Joseph Kilpatrick, an official of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the chair of the new organization's management committee, says the EGA offers "a chance for funders to get together and talk about things we were funding, the problems we were having and the different priorities we could follow."

Waste Management is enthusiastic about the new organization. "It's a good way to share information," says Bill Brown, the company's director of environmental affairs.

But when EGA members met in San Francisco on November 30 to discuss the new organization, Greenpeace, which accepts no corporate donations, protested Waste Management's membership in the organization.

In a letter to the 100 or so participants at the meeting, Greenpeace Executive Director Peter Bahouth wrote, "Waste Management has absolutely no place in an association such as yours and threatens your reputation as environmental advocates. Their presence will raise disturbing questions about the kind of information to which the corporation will have access and about the influence they could have on the opinion and decisions of other grantmakers."

Greenpeace's protest split the EGA members down the middle. Some of the funders wanted the organization to be all-inclusive, while others wanted it to exclude organizations whose practices were inconsistent with environmental goals. Some of the grantmakers feared that the kinds of arguments used against Waste Management could eventually be applied to them. Says Kilpatrick, "One of the biggest reservations [at the meeting] was: who are we to judge? If we define some sort of standard of purity or ethical norm, what about us as private foundations? What about how we obtain our money or whose stock we have in our portfolio?"

After a lengthy debate, the grantmakers agreed to postpone the decision and ordered a committee to submit a report in late March on the kind of organization EGA should become and what its criteria for membership should be. After the meeting—which Waste Management representatives did not attend—EGA Secretary John Jensen assured Brown that the garbage giant was still an EGA member in good standing, according to Brown.

Covert influence: The corporation's funding of the environmental movement may have already borne fruit. Last year, Waste Management Chairman Dean Buntrock became a member of the National Wildlife Federation's board of directors. Then last March, National Wildlife Federation President Jay Hair set up a meeting between Buntrock and EPA Administrator Reilly.

After the meeting, Reilly announced that he would challenge the attempts by Southern states to restrict hazardous-waste disposal. When the National Wildlife Federation later issued a letter protesting the decision, the EPA head told a reporter that he was surprised because Hair had "hosted the breakfast at which I was lobbied to do the very thing we are doing" (see *In These Times*, Nov. 22, 1989).

Now that Waste Management is a member of the EGA, its clout will likely grow among those environmental groups that accept corporate funding, enabling it to further influence the environmental movement's priorities and direction.

Warns Robert Schaeffer, senior editor of *Greenpeace* magazine: "It will be like the fox guarding the chickens." □

Hazardous-waste barrel at a factory in New York City.



© 1989 Las Stone Impact Visuals

By David R. Dye

A double-edged sword for Costa Rica's Calderón

IN COSTA RICA, "DEMOCRACY" IS A SHIBBOLETH. As the one Central American country where government traditionally occurs by consensus, Costa Rica celebrates its quadrennial elections with a pomp that other Central Americans find unimaginable, even ridiculous. Though non-electoral participation in politics is low, some 80 to 90 percent of eligible voters duly inundates the polling booths at four-year intervals to express preferences in what is effectively a two-party system.

In their most recent exercise of this rite on February 4, Costa Rican voters gave the nod to 40-year-old lawyer Rafael Angel Calderón of the right-wing Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC). The close victory margin, 51 to 47 percent, reflected the similarities between Calderón and his chief rival, Carlos Manuel Castillo of the National Liberation Party (PLN). Even before the election Costa Rican political commentators had begun to brood over the danger of "singlepartyism." With the two big parties becoming more and more alike and the Marxist left moving increasingly to the margins, the options for Costa Rican voters now appear more narrow than the options for U.S. voters.

Though the differences are small, the implications of Calderón's victory are not unimportant, either for Costa Ricans or for the rest of Central America. President Oscar Arias, who under the constitution must finish his term May 8, consolidated Latin America's most successful program of economic adjustment and made Costa Rica the linchpin of the Central American peace process. The question many people inside and outside Costa Rica are asking now is how well Arias' successor will fill his shoes.

Once upon a time: The choice hasn't always been so limited. Prior to 1982, one could argue, Costa Ricans were able to make a genuine ideological choice, albeit not a very grand one. On one hand, they were offered the social-democratic program of the PLN—in power most of the time after a brief 1948 civil war—under whose aegis a modern welfare state was installed in an underdeveloped society that eventually became unable to pay for it. On the other hand, a conservative, business-oriented coalition, now incarnated in the PUSC, beckoned and was occasionally

given the voters' nod.

Over their last two administrations, the PLN, or Liberacionistas, have turned to the right, putting Costa Rica's economy through the paces of a "structural adjustment" designed to ensure future growth possibilities by making the country's wares salable on world markets.

To find the capital to do this, the PLN has deliberately underfinanced and partially dismantled the welfare state. As a result, the social inequalities Liberación has historically confronted are widening again, as government follows neoliberal economic management formulas advanced by the International

If Calderón tries to respond to the expectations his promises have nurtured, the economic adjustment will founder and he will face IMF-AID reprisals. If he doesn't, social tensions may well boil over into protest.

Monetary Fund (IMF) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID).

With both parties committed to the same neoliberal program, the question for the campaign became not what policies to adopt but how to sell neoliberal prescriptions to a public that felt it had swallowed enough bitter economic medicine over the last eight years. Of the two major contenders, PUSC standardbearer Calderón opted for the most daring and potentially dangerous approach—disguising the pill as candy.

Papa and junior: Rafael Angel Calderón is the son of a former president of the same

name who served in the '40s and earned a reputation as the country's first social reformer. Tearing a page from papa's book and reversing traditional party roles in Costa Rica, "Junior" Calderón, as he is known, decided for this election—his third try for the presidency—to clothe himself as a populist. Taking to the campaign trail, Calderón began offering profit sharing to workers, cheap credit to farmers and 160,000 new housing units for the nation's neediest families in an attempt to attract the groups whose lives have been most "adjusted" by the PLN's policies.

It was an effective strategy. "The family housing bond is the theme we've gotten the most advantage from," explains PUSC campaign subchief Cristobal Zawadzski, referring to a mortgage interest-rate subsidy that the party sold to voters as a housing giveaway. The PUSC housing ploy was aimed at the marginal urban underclass, swelled in recent years by migration from the countryside as peasant farmers hurt by Arias' agricultural policies left the land.

The PLN's Castillo, a brilliant but colorless economist, was unwilling to match this sort of pandering to the voters. In a technocrat's typical vein, he argued, "We must learn to redistribute wealth, not just income," adding that "the principal thing is to create jobs; without them we cannot solve the problem of housing, which has to be paid for."

Though the PLN campaign tried to sell an image of competence, it did not persuade voters who have seen their living standards fall under two PLN governments. Voters also have become disgusted with the PLN's official corruption, which includes alleged participation by high party figures in the Latin American drug traffic.

Paying the piper: Though PUSC attracted lower-class voters, Calderón's populist promises now shape up as a serious problem for the president-elect. They have already raised hackles among the country's upper crust, who fear that "Junior"—relatively inexperienced at governing—will not be able to handle the politics of the "adjustment" with the adroitness shown by the PLN. With decades of experience behind them, the Liberacionistas are skilled at coopting strikes and peasant protests, a talent Calderón will have to develop if he wants to keep economic restructuring on track.

The uncertainty is reportedly shared by the international financial agencies who know that Calderón will not have the money to redeem his promises to the poor. Economic adjustment means austerity, and Costa Rica's budget deficit, at 3 percent of gross national product, is already well beyond IMF guidelines. Informed sources say the IMF expects to see signs of fiscal responsibility before it approves money for the PUSC government. Though the names being rumored for top economic Cabinet posts suggest Calderón's willingness to send the proper signals, more will be required.

The dilemma for the new government is thus sharply etched. If Calderón tries to respond to the expectations his promises

have nurtured, the economic adjustment will founder and he will face IMF-AID reprisals. If he doesn't, social tensions may well boil over into protest. At the very least, this could make a PUSC re-election difficult in 1994. It might even add Costa Rica to the camp of Latin American countries in which anti-popular economic policies have caused violent explosions. How Calderón copes with this dilemma will in large measure determine the fate of his presidency.

Doubts about the president-elect's management of domestic policy are mirrored on the foreign front. A staunch anti-communist, Calderón lost his 1986 electoral bid by echoing Ronald Reagan's bellicosity toward the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Were he to indulge his personal inclinations, Calderón might well line up against the Nicaraguans with the region's other newly elected right-wing regimes.

Decreasing threat: Fortunately for Central America, there are signs that the new reality of East-West detente is beginning to affect the Costa Rican right's foreign-policy thinking. From this perspective, the current wave of "anti-communism triumphant"—dissolution of the Soviet empire and the isolation of Cuba in Latin America—has lessened the perceived threat from Costa Rica's near neighbor Nicaragua.

Bernd Niehaus, a former foreign secretary rumored to be Calderón's choice for the post again, phrases it this way: "We are anti-communist and anti-totalitarian, not anti-Sandinista. We recognize that the Sandinistas have changed their positions." Niehaus indicated that if the Sandinistas win the February 25 election "fairly," Costa Rica is prepared to work with the new Nicaraguan government.

Coming from someone who opposed the Arias peace plan in 1987, this is hopeful talk. Nevertheless, there are disturbing eddies in the discourse. Niehaus also speaks vaguely of putting teeth into the Esquipulas peace process—unspecified sanctions for non-compliance with agreements that would bring extraregional actors into the picture. Along with ideas about building up the Nicaraguan opposition for 1996, this indicates that the Costa Rican right is far from reconciled to living with the Sandinistas in the long run.

What does all this add up to, in terms of how Costa Rica responds to the upcoming Sandinista victory and to other regional diplomatic issues? Costa Rican political analysts concur that, unlike Arias, Calderón does not have the stomach to stand up to Washington. Should U.S. President George Bush decide to continue destabilization of Nicaragua, he can probably bludgeon the new Costa Rican government into going along. If he doesn't, the Costa Ricans will likely seize the opening to promote resumption of Central American economic integration, seen as a necessary complement to present restructuring efforts.

Outgoing President Arias leaves office with immense prestige among Costa Ricans for having guided his nation through troubled times. Incoming President Calderón, lacking Arias' skill and daring, is unlikely to match his record. The conservative-turned-populist has finally proven he can win an election. He must now demonstrate that he can handle the consequences. □

David R. Dye writes regularly for *In These Times* on Central American issues.

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Warsaw entertains capitalism in its finest form: white-collar corruption

By Larry O'Connor

WARSAW

FIFTY-SEVEN-YEAR-OLD EDWARD GLODZ wouldn't win many popularity contests among the 4,000 employees of the TEWA company. But the granite-faced director of this state-owned electronics factory on the outskirts of Warsaw is no fool. Months before last year's semi-free elections swept the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) from national political dominance, Glodz saw the writing on the wall. He had enjoyed a privileged life as a member of the nomenclature, the vast technostucture of some 900,000 top-level bureaucrats and managers appointed over the past four decades by the Communist Party. But the system that had served him so long and well was decadent and dying. Even a lifelong Marxist could see that a new economic order was emerging. For this apparatchik, it was time to jump ship, time to become a capitalist. And Glodz figured out a way to do it with almost no capital.

At the end of 1988 Glodz and 16 other top executives of TEWA sat down, anted up 1,000 Polish zlotys (about 33 cents at the time) each and formed Microelectronics, their own personal corporation whose sole purpose, at least on paper, was to handle the hiring of temporary employees for TEWA. But according to a committee of TEWA employees established last fall to investigate the corporation's dealings with TEWA, Microelectronics rapidly developed into what the committee called a "parasite company" that used the offices, equipment and personnel of TEWA to line the pockets of the corporation's 17 shareholders.

Glodz has not contested his role in founding or running Microelectronics in negotiations with the committee, said a source within TEWA who requested anonymity. But in a recent interview at TEWA's offices, Glodz was more cautious, if somewhat icy. Asked whether he had ever heard of the corporation, he replied only that "there are many microelectronic companies in Poland."

Far too many like Microelectronics, in the view of most Poles. According to economics professor Jan Mojzel, Poland has no fewer than 5,000 so-called "nomenclature companies"—phantom private businesses established and operated by members of the widely hated nomenclature that feed upon the state-owned enterprises they themselves manage. To the average Pole, it is a cynical attempt by those considered the oppressors of society to co-opt the democratic revolution.

White-collar crime: Nomenclature companies exist throughout the economy, not only within the electronics industry. But because they usually function clandestinely and because primary regulatory agencies remain in the hands of the party appointees (who, while not necessarily corrupt, haven't proven exceptionally competent), the exact cost of what could be called white-collar looting is difficult to pin down.

In just one two-month period at the end of 1989, Microelectronics reportedly had earned profits equivalent to \$31,000. According to the source within TEWA, this was at a time when its operations had been significantly

slowly by the internal investigation. It seems likely that the overall costs to the economy by such companies would number in the tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars.

Burdened with a \$40 billion debt, hyperinflation and a disastrously low and still declining standard of living, Poland is in a desperate economic situation. The government, which has introduced an austere economic policy in hopes of a long-term resolution of the situation, remains immensely popular at present. But how long Poles will remain so tolerant is an open question.

While nomenclature companies have not played a major role in Poland's economic decline, they are symptomatic of the decrepit system that has. The collective scheming of many factory managers constitutes a significant drain on an already-reeling economy. "It's a very serious problem," says Mojzel, a Solidarity adviser and head of the Department of the Functioning of the Economy at the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Although nomenclature companies of one form or another have existed in Poland for at least a decade, the overwhelming major-

ity, according to Mojzel, have been established in the past two years, during a time of economic and political liberalization. "It really snowballed after the [Solidarity Prime Minister Tadeusz] Mazowiecki government took over," says Mojzel.

Not a happy ending: In some ways, the current situation is just the epilogue to a long sad chapter in Polish history. For 40 years leading up to last June's election, the nomenclature was effectively above the law. Corruption was its *modus vivendi*, and the Polish constitution, despite lip service to a grand socialist revolution, was little more than a rationalization for one-party rule.

Solidarity chopped off the head of the monster last summer, taking control of the parliament and most ministerial-level positions in the government. But most of the technostucture of apparatchiks remains intact. And although the constitution has been amended, striking references to the party's hegemony, a cogent body of jurisprudence has yet to evolve. Until very recently it was not illegal for managers of state firms to own and operate corporations in concert with their official duties, despite the rather obvious conflict of interest.

Although they probably realize their days are numbered, many within the nomenclature have taken the lack of effective controls as a green flag to continued corruption. Gregorz Gorny, who reports on the nomenclature for the Solidarity daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, estimates that about half of all private corporations launched in 1989 are owned by the nomenclature. "They [the nomenclature] realize that the Communist Party is losing its strength, and they want to get as much as they can financially before they lose control," he says.

For the Solidarity-led government, continued corruption is not only an economic concern but a political one as well. To the average Pole who reads of the sacking of security-police headquarters in East Germany, the toppling of the Ceausescu regime in Romania and the scheduling of totally free elections throughout the East bloc, there is a feeling that Poland is lagging behind. Combine that with the rising difficulty of feeding a family on a salary of the equivalent of \$50 to \$100 per month and a potentially explosive situation arises. "I like what they did in Romania," says a porter in a small Warsaw hotel. "That's what we should do here: kill the bandits."

The party—which has split into two smaller parties with new democratic names—and, through it, the nomenclature, is desperately trying to shore up its flagging image. The current line is that the nomenclature, for the most part, were merely "active" individuals working for incremental improvements in a system they knew was crazy but that was imposed on them from above.

While the argument clearly doesn't fly with many Poles, it has gained limited credibility with some in the Solidarity leadership. Yet even among the skeptics, virtually no one would willingly provoke a confrontation with the remaining communist apparatus, which still includes the military-police complex.

Can't live with 'em...: The consensus also seems to be that the nomenclature in fact comprises Poland's professional-managerial class. "No matter how much we don't like them, there's the feeling we can't revive the economy without them," says Gorny.

Despite the populist sentiment for settling old scores, Solidarity has offered an olive

branch to those of the nomenclature willing to play by new democratic rules. Given that rather magnanimous gesture, the actions of the renegade element seem all the more despicable.

But reining in the latter has not proved an easy task, as the continuing problem with nomenclature companies illustrates. Mojzel is confident that a combination of legislation (some already passed into law and some currently under consideration by the parliament) and an increasingly vigilant labor force has already stemmed proliferation of new companies.

Others, including Gorny, are not yet convinced. "Many reforms have been introduced, but there is still a great amount of confusion," he says.

Just breaking up the existing machine could prove a long process. While some companies operate in isolation, Gorny says directors of such ventures more typically operate within a shadowy, cancerous network of officials—what some describe as a mafia. A single manager might be secretly involved in five or more such companies. And because many operate away from the scrutiny of worker councils, as private distributors for public firms, they can be difficult to trace.

But TEWA employees know the problems of dealing with the "old nomenclature" firsthand. A source within TEWA, who out of fear of reprisal asked to be identified only as a Solidarity member, painted a nightmarish portrait of Stalinist management and widespread corruption within the company.

Since the private-contract work of the nomenclature company was generally done during TEWA's regular hours, the favored employees received double pay. Those considered unreliable—who didn't know how to "keep quiet"—were not only locked out of the financial arrangement but also were forced to take on the work not completed by their peers. To sweeten the pot, said the source, managers regularly falsified work schedules in order to overcharge TEWA for labor costs.

Unpopularity at a price: If the Microelectronics affair has not increased Glodz' popularity, it has been financially rewarding. Although a yearly financial statement was not available, the reported \$31,000 in profits for the single two-month period alone would represent a 50,000 percent return on the shareholders' total investment.

In most Western countries, Glodz could have difficulty avoiding criminal indictment. But after 40 years of party mismanagement, the wheels of justice grind a bit slower in Poland. Although the workers committee is a legally sanctioned body, it has limited authority. Last fall, Glodz and two other TEWA executives agreed to give up their shares in Microelectronics, according to the Solidarity member. Glodz currently is being investigated for his role in what could prove to be an even larger scandal involving numerous companies and the misappropriation of factory equipment. In late December, Glodz received a non-binding vote of no confidence from TEWA's workers council.

But because of loopholes large enough to drive an electronics delivery truck through, whether Glodz violated the law is still questionable. As of late January, he had retained his position as the head of TEWA.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, Glodz' recent promises to improve his behavior are difficult for most TEWA employees to believe, says the source. "He seems to be afraid, but he's just too hard-brained to change." □

Larry O'Connor is an Oslo-based writer who recently traveled to Poland.

POLAND

In some ways, the current situation is just the epilogue to a long sad chapter in Polish history. For 40 years leading up to last June's election, the nomenclature was effectively above the law. Corruption was its *modus vivendi*, and the Polish constitution, despite lip service to a grand socialist revolution, was little more than a rationalization for one-party rule.

NFL

Continued from page 6

and downs of life."

All of this turmoil is aggravated by the intense pressure of their profession, he added. "It's no wonder they seek chemical solutions."

Chambers' empathy for the athlete doesn't lessen his dislike of the media's depiction of

drug abuse as an explicit African-American problem. "Because the drug problem has been portrayed as a black thing, people are more willing to accept violations of civil liberties and draconian laws than they would normally be," Chambers said.

Magnificent evasion: According to the NFL's director of communications, Joe Browne, most of the 26 black players suspended for positive drug tests have admitted to drug use, so the issue of inaccurate testing procedure is moot. But Doug Allen, assistant executive director of the NFL Players Association, insisted that the charges against Tennant vindicate their distrust of him. The players' group wanted independent doctors and laboratories, with no link to the league, to do the drug testing.

In the WJLA report, a former employee of

Tennant alleged the NFL adviser had a "hit list" directed at some black players. According to the employee, Giants linebacker Lawrence Taylor, Washington Redskins defensive end Dexter Manley and Redskins running back George Rogers were singled out. According to player agent Marty Zucker, many players suspended in the drug-testing program do have complaints about the procedure but believe that protesting may dim their chances to return.

In all of this hoopla surrounding drug testing, additional questions must be asked: why are drug tests necessary for grown men whose professions demand that they perform optimally? Why is the public so enraged when a halfback or pitcher is caught with cocaine metabolites in his urine? The long list of self-destructed actors and musicians, for example, has sparked no similar drive for drug testing among those performers.

What is it about sports that demands such assiduousness? In a famous *Harper's* magazine essay, Wilfred Sheed wrote, "Sports continues its rounds as the Magnificent Evasion, since it also keeps us away from the bad news at home and in one's psyche. Many men, and a spattering of women, talk about sports from morning to night for fear something else might get in."

Without a doubt, drug testing is narrowing

the scope of civil liberties in this country. The assumption of guilt has replaced the presumption of innocence, and the replacement hasn't been as cost-free as testing advocates would have us believe. Not only are mass drug tests expensive and unreliable but they also have a limited sensitivity to certain drugs. Drug testing in the armed forces, for example, has encouraged cocaine use, since coke metabolites dissipate in a few days. By contrast, metabolites for marijuana, a much more benign substance, can be detected weeks after its use.

Further costs of drug testing are the violations of workers' rights and the bad employee morale that accompanies a widespread presumption of guilt. The most important price, however, is the invasion of privacy. Urine tests may be unable to specify certain drug use, but they can reveal other things like susceptibility to heart attacks, whether a person has had a venereal disease or is subject to depression.

"Given enough body fluids and enough lab technicians, I could find out hundreds of things about you," said James Woodford, a forensic chemist in Atlanta who is frequently consulted in drug-related cases.

And it appears that drug testing, like so many other U.S. innovations, has been adapted to serve the cause of racism. □

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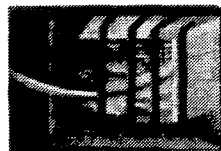
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By Diana Johnstone

NOW THAT SOVIET AND EAST GERMAN LEADERS have given the green light to German reunification, Washington policymakers are sounding the alarm against the new threat they see looming against arbitrary U.S. control of everything in the world: a united social democratic Germany.

U.S. press attacks on the Social Democratic Party (SPD) recall the press campaign a year ago against West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Then the central issue was introduction of new nuclear missiles into the country in the guise of NATO "modernization." Now the central issue is whether the whole of a unified Germany, and perhaps the rest of Eastern Europe as well (except the USSR), should be absorbed into NATO. Any variation from the U.S. dogma is branded as "neutralism" playing into Soviet hands.

The broader underlying issue is whether a permanent peace settlement is possible for Germany and Europe, or whether U.S. leaders are determined to maintain an adversarial split between "the West" and whatever remains of the Soviet Union as a pretext for permanent American military presence and veto power in Germany, the main power in Europe.

On February 1, just back from Moscow talks with Mikhail Gorbachov, East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow surprised everyone by presenting his own plan for unification of the two German states. Nobody had expected a prime minister of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to give up so soon—and so easily. The most obvious cause of this precipitation was the impending breakdown of the economy due in large part to the ongoing exodus of the work force—more than 58,000 East Germans moved West last month, a rate approaching 2,000 per day. Plans for unification may not stem the flow, but at the least they will mean that the GDR will share responsibility with West Germany for finding solutions to a multitude of problems.

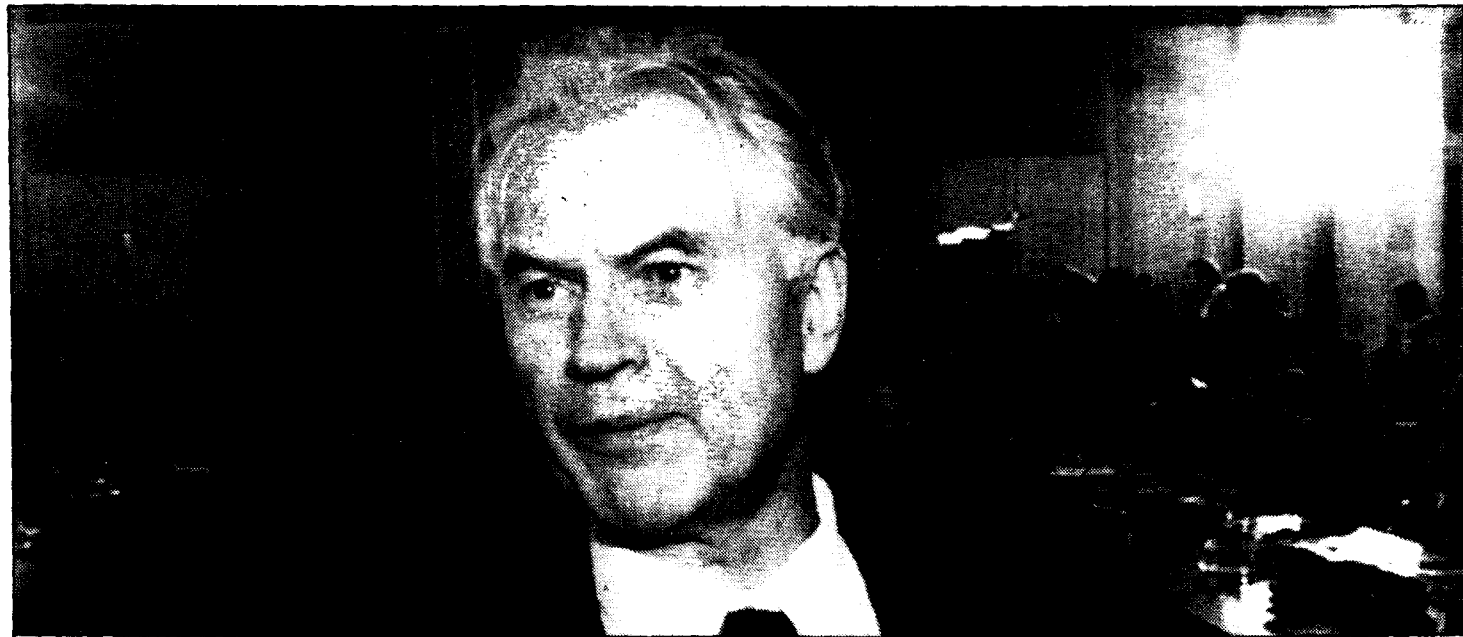
Surprise, surprise: Modrow told a startled press conference in East Berlin that the post-war chapter is ending and "the unification of the two German states is back on the agenda." The German question must be solved "only with free self-determination of Germans in both states, in cooperation with the four powers"—the U.S., the USSR, Britain and France—"and with regard to the interests of all European states." He called for a "national dialogue, held in full awareness of responsibilities," and suggested possible steps and conditions.

Those steps could start with economic, monetary and transport unions and end with a single parliament adopting a single constitution, with Berlin as capital. The conditions included military neutrality and a suggestion to the four powers to settle all post-war questions, including the presence of foreign troops on German soil and membership in military alliances.

NATO immediately rejected the suggestion of neutrality. NATO General Secretary Manfred Wörner, a former West German defense minister, said German neutrality was too high a price to pay for unity. Chancellor Helmut Kohl reiterated his unfaltering fidelity to the Atlantic alliance.

The Social Democrats' position is more complicated, based on staying in NATO while striving to transform both alliances into an all-European system of "common se-

Will NATO absorb a unified Germany?



East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow puts reunification and free self-determination back on the agenda.

curity." SPD spokesman Horst Ehmke rejected "neutrality" as the wrong concept. "In a future confederation, it is much more a matter of a hinge function of the two German states in different alliances in building a system of common security," he said. American policymakers do not seem very motivated to understand the SPD position. Not recognizing it as their own, they readily dismiss it as "neutralism" in disguise.

Modrow apparently made his proposal without clearing it first with East Germany's ruling party, the rapidly shrinking Socialist

Unity Party (SED), recently renamed the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). The SED-PDS executive board stuck to its position that "unification is not immediately possible" and demanded that any unified Germany be not only neutralized but demilitarized—a stipulation Modrow left out.

A few days later, Modrow indicated that neutrality was just a suggestion for a dialogue and not a firm condition. Anyway, the question will be negotiated not by Modrow but by whatever GDR government emerges from the free elections scheduled for March 18.

U.S. nightmare: That government could very well be dominated by the newly constituted East German SPD. Later this year, elections are scheduled to be held in West Germany. For the first time since the defeat of Helmut Schmidt, the SPD has a strong candidate for chancellor, 44-year old Oskar Lafontaine, triumphantly re-elected prime minister of his home state, the Saarland, on January 28. Thus the SPD could come to power in both German states this year. German unification would then be negotiated between Social Democrats in the two German states.

This prospect horrifies those American policymakers who are not ready for such a complete collapse of Cold War oppositions.

To add to the bad humor of U.S. officialdom and think-tankery still in the habit of opposing whatever Moscow is for, the Modrow proposal can be interpreted as a sign that Gorbachov is rooting for the SPD in both Germanies.

Asked by the West German daily *Die Tageszeitung* what effect Modrow's proposal would have on the election campaign in the GDR, Stephan Bickhardt of one of East Germany's new opposition groups, Democracy Now, said he considered it "a clever election-cam-

paign help for the SPD." Bickhardt was "absolutely sure" the SED was not behind Modrow's project.

If this is true, there is nothing particularly sinister about it for "the West." On the contrary, it is yet another sign that former Marxist-Leninists in the Soviet bloc are converting en masse to "Western" social democracy. But the conservative champions of "Western values" don't see it that way.

The *International Herald Tribune* featured a front-page comment by Barry James explaining that Modrow had brought back from Moscow "a ready-made plan for German unity based on neutrality—a plan that was ... drawn up by Stalin's secret police chief, Lavrenti P. Beria." The Soviets, in short, have always been trying to decouple West Germany from the U.S. by "holding out the vague promise of reunification in exchange for neutrality. This siren song has always found a receptive response among the West German Social Democratic Party."

This hatchet job was continued a few days later by Joseph Fitchett when he reported on the annual high-level Wehrkunde strategic conference in Munich, where the "first

signs of West German political maneuvering on the neutrality question startled U.S. and other allied officials" when "prominent Social Democrats" said that "NATO had no role to play in a future Europe and a single Germany. Their remarks, political analysts said, pointed to an SPD political strategy aimed at pursuing the question of neutrality in the belief that East Germany's new government, after elections next month, will continue insisting that reunification be accompanied by neutrality." It is hard to believe that such confusion and silliness are not deliberately designed to misinform.

Fitchett quoted former official Helmut Sonnenfeldt as accusing the Social Democrats of "wanting to appeal to German nationalism by casting NATO in an invidious role as an obstacle to German unity and perhaps an expression of secret U.S. and Allied distrust of the Germans."

Well, well: Everybody as informed as Son-

nenfeldt knows that "distrust of the Germans" is indeed a fundamental reason for the existence of NATO, which maintains German forces under U.S. command. And indeed this is precisely the historic reason the SPD finally accepted NATO as justified, despite the Social Democrats' initial opposition to remilitarizing Germany. This is one reason Social Democrats still do not oppose NATO but rather advocate its transformation into an all-European security structure. And what is the alarm about "neutrality" if not "distrust of the Germans"?

Moreover, it is the U.S. favorite, Helmut Kohl, who has courted German nationalism from Bitburg cemetery to formerly German Silesia. The Social Democrats are aware of the dangers, and the success of their current campaign is the best guarantee that Germany can be reunited without a dangerous upsurge of nationalism.

All the West German parties are backing their own counterparts in East Germany, to the detriment of the new maverick groups like New Forum and Democracy Now. Thus a de facto political reunification is underway, supported by years of East German exposure to West German television. The SPD seems to be dashing ahead of the others in its political colonizing in the East.

It brings to the task the experience of Europe's strongest mass party, loads of modern office equipment, the historic memories of deep-rooted Social Democratic traditions in Thuringen and other regions of East Germany and retired SPD Chairman Willy Brandt, who is enjoying a new career as beloved Social Democratic father figure in the East. Brandt represents unification sentiment anchored to the left, while Lafontaine appeals to a younger generation more concerned about its lifestyle, Europe and even the world than about German unification.

"Oskar" is a Social Democrat of the '80s, anti-nuclear but not anti-capitalist, actively concerned with the environment. He was the first politician to criticize the generous social benefits provided to German immigrants from the East. It did not hurt his popularity, and the government is taking the cue and cutting the benefits that help lure the immigrant wave.

Lafontaine is no nationalist. But because he forcefully opposed deployment of Pershing 2 and cruise nuclear missiles, it is a safe assumption that Washington doesn't wish him success.

EAST BLOC

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Dave Lindorff

PIP Vice President Fernando Martin: ultimately shooting for independence.

Independence party eager to expose the political contradictions of U.S.

Fernando Martin, vice president of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and the PIP's only senator in the island's upper legislative chamber, is confident that if the U.S. Congress approves a status plebiscite to be held next year, the statehood option will win. This is something he seems to look forward to with relish.

Why has the PIP, which has bitterly opposed statehood since its founding as a split away from the dominant Popular Democratic Party in 1946, endorsed the idea of a plebiscite it has said fails to comply with international law and which it knows it will lose? Martin explained in his senate office in El Capitolio in San Juan, "We in PIP knew that we had to say 'shoot' to demonstrate that the bully had no bullets."

The PIP's goal in participating in congressional hearings to draw up the specific terms of the island referendum has been to ensure that the terms of each alternative are honestly and completely presented. Advocates of "enhanced" or "perfected" autonomy have been forced in those hearings to concede both that they are asking for more handouts and that the proposed new arrangement cannot be considered "permanent" or an agreement between equals. At the same time, statehooders have been unable to win any support from Congress for their goal of a Spanish-speaking *jibaro*, or peasant, state or for a binding plebiscite.

The end of a myth: "The most important thing happened already," said Martin, "when the House leadership made it clear that no plebiscite bill that was

'self-activating' could be approved. That is the beginning of the end of a myth in Puerto Rico that the U.S. would accept statehood with open arms. Now the stage has been set for a restructuring of island politics—a historical rectification. The destruction of 'free association' as an alternative has commenced, and once the balloon of statehood has been punctured the process of rehabilitation of independence as an alternative will begin."

Martin believes that the independence movement should try to expose the island's political contradictions in order to break politics out of what he calls decades of "stagnation." He and his party are confident that a rejected statehood petition would revitalize the independence alternative. "In Puerto Rico," he said, "even the most rabid statehooders—and I come from a long line of them in my family—almost none of them will ever say *nosotros Americanos* [we Americans]. It's always *nosotros Puertorriquenos* [we Puerto Ricans]. America is *them*. Many Puerto Ricans might want to be part of a state for financial reasons, but they don't want to be *Americans*."

This peculiarity explains the powerful sense one has in Puerto Rico of being in a foreign land despite the ubiquitous symbols of American commercial culture. It can be confusing to an outsider however, because all Puerto Ricans already are U.S. citizens.

Unlike blacks or Puerto Ricans in the U.S., Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico don't perceive themselves as a minority. They may exhibit some of the psychological pathology of colonialism described by Frantz Fanon (large things—a big cow or a big chicken, for instance—may be described as an *American* cow or chicken), but at the same time an exuberant Puerto Rican pride is evident everywhere. "In a sense," said Martin, "Puerto Rico is more of a nation than

The state of Puerto Rico

many Latin American nations. The upper class of Venezuela, for instance, is much more internationalized than in Puerto Rico. They're at home anywhere. We have here a tremendously homogeneous culture. The only thing we have been lacking has been the political will to be a nation."

The island of burden: In Martin's view, Puerto Rico is an economic burden for the U.S. that now, counting transfer payments and lost tax revenues (U.S. business subsidiaries located in Puerto Rico pay no taxes to the U.S.), costs more than \$3.5 billion a year. But it is a burden he says Washington would like to gracefully unload—if it could do so without producing an economic disaster that would lead to a politically unstable and unfriendly nation. "No one in Washington wants to maintain the current status," he explained, "and I don't think that they really want us as a state either."

Why not statehood? First of all, given the level of poverty on the island, becoming a state would require a massive and costly "Marshall Plan" to bring it up to at least the economic level of Mississippi or Appalachia. The task would be all the harder as statehood would eventually mean a loss of the tax breaks and low-wage differential that have allowed the island to lure U.S. businesses. Meanwhile, welfare transfer payments, which would have to be raised to the national level, would soar. But more importantly, said Martin, there is concern about Puerto Rican nationalism.

"It's a little like Quebec," Martin explained. "It doesn't matter if you make Puerto Rico a state. You'll always have a nationalist idea, and it will always be a thorn in the side of the nation. Right now there are 100,000 people on this island who want an independent Puerto Rico. Maybe next year it will be 50,000, but who can say it couldn't also become 500,000? And let's assume the unthinkable—that suddenly 100 percent of Puerto Ricans say they want a state and the U.S. grants it. There's still a small problem. I have three small children, and who's to say that when they grow up they won't be *independentistas*?"

That can't happen in Kansas or Oklahoma, but it has happened in Quebec and it would probably happen in Puerto Rico. And in a nation that has over 20 million Hispanics strung out in lands the U.S. took from Mexico, the idea of resurrecting the concept of secession again 130 years after a war was fought to eliminate the concept would be absolutely stupid. Congress will not do that."

A plague of independence: Whatever the logic of the PIP's strategy, the hearings themselves, which last summer had islanders riveted to their TV screens, have provided a boost to the *independentistas*' cause. For over 90 years, American propaganda has depicted the island as too small to survive alone economically. Simultaneously it has raised the specter of Cuba's Fidel Castro or the Dominican Republic's Rafael Trujillo as likely models for an independent government. As a movement, independence too has been attacked for over 90 years, first by the occupying U.S. military and later by the FBI and island police. Even today the government has been caught maintaining political dossiers on upwards of 20,000 *independentistas* of all political stripes, and it is known that harboring *independentista* sentiments can be a bar to employment, even in private industry.

"Being an *independentista* has never been a good move for a young man setting out on a career," said Martin. "For years, most people have treated *independentistas* as kinds of weirdos. Now suddenly, they have seen us and our model for independence treated with respect by a committee of U.S. senators. Take my own mother, a statehooder. I've been talking to her about independence for 20 years. She knows I'm a serious person and a nice son—even a senator. But I could never make a dent in her feeling that independence would be a disaster."

"But after I went to the hearings," he continued, "I came home and she said, 'You know, this independence might not be such a bad idea.' It wasn't what I said, it was seeing all those congress-people talking about the viability of independence."

-D.L.

VILLALBA, PUERTO RICO

NINETY-TWO YEARS AGO, AMERICAN troops came ashore on the bay of Guanica on the southern coast of Puerto Rico. That invasion of a lonely and useless—if stunningly beautiful—outpost of what remained of the Spanish colonial empire, during the almost-farcical Spanish-American War, cost the U.S. three fatalities.

It was perhaps an even less inspiring military maneuver than former President Ronald Reagan's assault on Grenada. But it nonetheless began the curious saga of American colonialism in the Caribbean—a saga that has sullied the ideals of America's revolution and left both the U.S. and its colonial possession in a seemingly endless and often painful conundrum.

On March 2, the House Subcommittee on Insular and International Affairs will open hearings on a bill that—for the third time—would offer Puerto Ricans a chance to vote on whether they want independence, statehood or some continuation of the current neocolonial status known as "commonwealth" or "free association." Hearings on a similar bill were held last June and July in the Senate Energy, Agriculture and Finance committees.

If approved by those committees and ultimately passed by both houses of Congress, the so-called status plebiscite, which already has the support of President George Bush—a self-avowed advocate of Puerto Rican statehood—would be held in mid-1991, with a runoff between the top two options held later in the fall.

The Senate hearings, which received almost no news coverage on the mainland but were broadcast live in Puerto Rico last summer clearly exposed the dilemma created by American rule over the island and its 3.3 million inhabitants (another 2.4 million Puerto Ricans live in the mainland U.S.). It is widely assumed that a narrow majority of islanders advocates statehood. Yet Congress is understandably loath to admit as a 51st state to the union a territory in which a significant minority—somewhere between 40 and 49 percent—opposes absorption by the U.S. And perhaps as many as 100,000 to 200,000 of them are *independentistas*, militantly opposed to annexation.

A new kind of state: No other territory has ever become a state without overwhelming local support for annexation. Support for statehood in Hawaii and Alaska was almost universal. Furthermore, most of the island's statehooders are calling for a peculiar kind of state—one that would be Spanish-speaking and that would continue to field its own team in the Olympics and other international sporting events.

Racial issues aside, few in Congress are likely to endorse such an unprecedented addition to the union, yet these are the terms statehooders know they need in order to win. At the same time, Congress is also unwilling to simply slough off the island into independence. One reason: the Jones Act of 1917 made all Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens—albeit second-class citizens who pay no federal income tax, can't vote in national elections and whose congressional representative may not vote on the Congress floor, but citizens nonetheless. The dual patrimony created by a Puerto Rican nation would be unprecedented under U.S. law.

To complicate matters further, independence advocates, represented in the Senate

hearings primarily by officials of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIPs, or "Pipolos"), have made it clear that the plebiscite must be conducted under the auspices of some neutral arbiter and must be binding in its outcome on Congress and the U.S. government. Otherwise, say the advocates, it has no validity as an act of decolonization as defined by the United Nations.

The original version of the plebiscite bill under consideration, as conceived by Senate Energy Committee Chairman Bennett Johnston (D-LA), would have at least been binding upon Congress. But House Democratic leaders have already stated, according to congressional and other sources, that such a bill would be doomed in the House.

As has been the case in Puerto Rico since the U.S. conquest in 1898, the island's fate is out of its own hands. Nonetheless, the movement in Congress toward some kind of status referendum has livened up a hitherto stagnating island politics. The two dominant parties, the pro-commonwealth popular Democrats, or Populares, and the pro-statehood new progressives, have for two decades vied for control of the island government, while the PIP has taken a third-party position. (A much smaller Marxist independence coalition, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, or PSP, also plays an

An independent island and a rebellion remembered

We had just driven over the ridge of the Cordillera Central, the rugged 4,000-foot mountain range that bisects the 110-mile-long island of Puerto Rico from east to west, and had wound down a narrow road through lush rain forest that the U.S. Army favors as a training ground for counterinsurgency Special Forces troops. Coming out of the jungle into a narrow valley lined with coffee bushes, we entered the outskirts of the rural town of Jayuya, the main site of the Nationalist Party's abortive rebellion against American colonial rule in 1950.

My friend Victor Santos, an activist of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) and sometime PIP political candidate in his hometown of Villalba, inquired at the first bar we passed if anyone in town might remember the uprising, and we were politely directed to the adjacent variety store.

There we found a squat fellow, Olvidio Irizarry, the 62-year-old proprietor. When I asked him if he remembered the rebellion, there was a long silence. He slowly closed the drawer of his cash box, walked around the corner of the counter and stood facing me quietly.

"Yes, I remember it well," he said finally. "I was one of the original group who marched down and took over the police station."

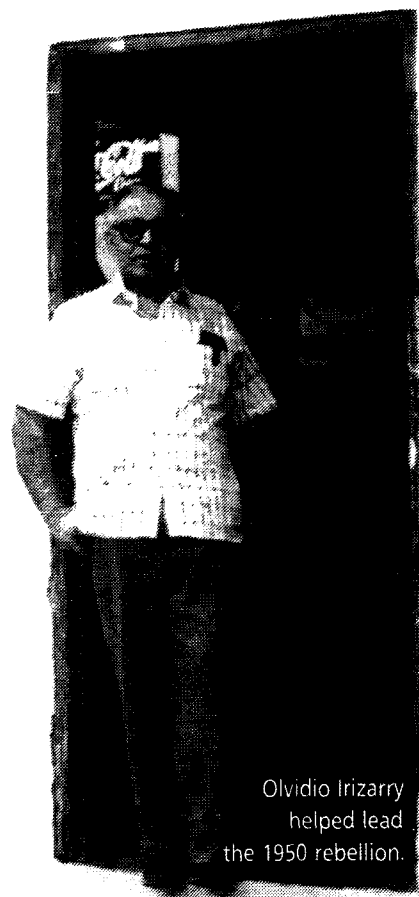
The rebellion had been hastily organized at the time, he said. "We got word that the government was planning a mass arrest, so we met in that house across the street and decided to attack the police first."

Asked how many had begun the assault, Irizarry closed his eyes, folded his hands and moved his lips quietly. After about a minute spent visualizing the

electoral role but is too small to win any seats in the legislature. Yet because its small membership includes a disproportionate number of lawyers, writers and university intellectuals, its ideological and political significance is greater than its numbers suggest at first glance.)

An unsuccessful story: This would be the first status vote since 1967, when a non-binding plebiscite was last held. That vote was boycotted by *independentistas* and a segment of statehooders. Although commonwealth won, low voter turnout gave the results little credibility. Indeed, Congress ignored its call for enhanced autonomy.

"Commonwealth status," under which the island government has local control—subject to a congressional veto and subservient to all federal laws and regulations that do not expressly exempt Puerto Rico—is seemingly being seen as a dead end. After 40 years of planned industrialization, primarily through a program of 10- to 30-year tax holidays for new companies, Puerto Ricans still have a per-capita income that is half that of the state of Mississippi and a third that of the U.S. as a whole. Official unemployment hovers above 15 percent even in boom times, and more than 60 percent of the population is on welfare.



Olvidio Irizarry helped lead the 1950 rebellion.

Dave Lindorff

events of the day, he opened his eyes again and said, "We were 13."

The attack on the police, which left one dead on each side, ended with the rebels in control. "Then we marched on to the prison and took that, releasing the prisoners and declaring a republic," Irizarry said. Along the way from the police station, he added, the rebel group picked up "about 200 more supporters—students and farmers who put aside what they were doing and joined us."

Similar uprisings were occurring in Ponce, Aricibo and other cities. Crushed after 72 hours, the rebellion left 21 Nationalist rebels, nine policemen and national guardsmen dead. Every October 30, Irizarry said, the rebellion is commemorated in Jayuya by an assembly of young *independentistas* and Nation-

The discredited Populares are pushing for an "improved" version of commonwealth that would provide the island with many of the benefits of statehood—such as full access to federal food-stamp and welfare-benefit programs and education grants and more political autonomy, including control over immigration, shipping, air travel and import duties. The Populares' claim is that only enhanced commonwealth status would improve the economic situation while preserving Puerto Rican culture. In the Senate hearings, it was clear that Congress took a dim view of this proposal for both its greater handouts and greater autonomy, but the party continues to push the idea at home as though it were a viable option.

Meanwhile, the old base of the Popular Democrats' power—the rural poor or the recently urbanized poor—has eroded with industrialization and urbanization. The clear beneficiary of this loss of support has been the PNP, which has unabashedly sold the idea of statehood—at least for island consumption—as a ticket to improved U.S. welfare grants. Statehooders are even able to fend off the Populares' dire warnings of a federal income tax by observing that the 60 percent of Puerto Rico's population that

Continued on page 22

alists who place a wreath on the grave of the rebellion's first martyr.

For his audacious effort to free his country at the age of 22, Irizarry says he spent 10 years in American prisons. Freed in 1960, he returned to face regular harassment.

"Vigilantes bothered me at first," he said. "They would tell people not to talk with me—to stay away. Then they tried to destroy my credit, to ruin my store. My police letter of good conduct has three Xs, so I could never get a job. But the people in town, most of them, still say they're proud of what we did. They are proud of Jayuya's place in Puerto Rico's history, and they like to hear me talk about it."

Politically inactive today, Irizarry still closely follows political events. "I am an *independentista*," he explained. "The strategy of the PIP in the plebiscite is correct." Of the Macheteros, a left-wing underground group engaged in armed struggle for independence, he said, "Their strategy won't work. The old Nationalist Party was Catholic and deeply Puerto Rican. The radical movement today is more pro-Communist. It isn't part of the culture."

Today Irizarry poses no military threat to American control of Puerto Rico, but the idea that drove him to arms in 1950 and that he still carries should give pause to any mainland advocates of statehood.

"Will Puerto Rico ever gain independence?" he was asked.

"Of course," he replied. "I expect Puerto Rico to be independent someday. Puerto Ricans will never assimilate."

"But what about the plebiscite?" I asked. "What if statehood won and the U.S. granted it. Wouldn't the cause be lost at that point?"

"No. Of course not," he said. "Think of the Basques, or of Northern Ireland. This idea will never go away." —D.L.

EDITORIAL



Gorbachov is giving up his monopoly in order to save party's power

The proposed changes in the Soviet Union's political structure adopted by the Communist Party Central Committee meeting in Moscow last week are the most profound and far-reaching since the end of the civil war in 1920. While Mikhail Gorbachov and his supporters in the Central Committee still see the Communist Party as the vanguard of Soviet politics, they realize that it can play this role only if it is freely chosen by the Soviet people—and that cannot happen without free and open competition with other parties.

It is impossible to know whether Gorbachov reached this conclusion from a principled belief in democracy, or whether he merely came to realize that the Soviet political structure must either reflect the reality of an already-existing pluralism or face a second civil war. But in the end it doesn't matter, for like all great political leaders he has made a decision that not only took great courage but is also the right and the necessary thing to do. Like Abraham Lincoln, who issued the Emancipation Proclamation partly from a principled opposition to slavery and partly in order to win the American Civil

War, Gorbachov will be remembered as one of the greatest political leaders of this century.

Yet, while the decision to move toward a genuine multiparty political system will probably avert civil war, it will not end the hostilities and hatreds that festered during 70 years of stifling and often vicious paternalism. The Soviet Union and all its peoples are paying a heavy price for the party's insistence on managing all aspects of public life, and for its failure to acknowledge and confront the ethnic hatreds and anti-Semitism that have smoldered beneath the surface of official society all these years. Now, as Soviet society moves toward democracy, it will have to come to grips with the host of unresolved conflicts dating back to pre-revolutionary days, as well as the distortions in the economy created by the Communist system of centrally administered planning.

As for the party itself, the proposed changes can only strengthen it. By making it possible for disaffected political and ethnic groups to participate within a revised political system, Gorbachov will increase his personal popularity and gain respect, if not awe, for his decisiveness. Conservatives within the party will now be more isolated than before, and those in the general population who support pluralism and democracy will tend to rally to the party leadership that has made this possible without insurrection. While the recent revolutions in Eastern Europe have been made against the party—and especially against its old leadership—Gorbachov is leading the new Soviet revolution in the name of the party, and in the process saving it.

The strange case of the missing huzzah

One might think that the developments in Moscow would be met with great enthusiasm—even wild celebration—in Washington. After all, the Soviets have now conceded the central ideological point of the Cold War. Political democracy is winning out over totalitarianism in the heart of the formerly evil empire.

Yet in place of celebration, there is discomfort, almost embarrassment, at the disappearance of an enemy. "The Soviet challenge remains very much real," said White House flack Marlin Fitzwater. "This is not the time to lay down arms." And the very day that the Soviet Central Committee was making its decision, President Bush went to the Mojave Desert to watch American soldiers fight "Soviet" tanks in a mock World War III battle. When it was over (the "Soviets" won), Bush made a speech in which he pushed his bloated military budget, warning that we shouldn't let "these encouraging changes, political or military, lull us into a sense of complacency." Then, after asking God to bless our country, Bush concluded, "Thank you, colonel, and now, back to war."

These efforts to sell the public the idea that we must continue to lavish more than \$300 billion a year on our arms manufacturers have now reached the level of the absurd. They are particularly difficult to rationalize because Bush's budget emphasizes increased spending on nuclear arms, which have no conceivable use except in a war with the Soviet Union. The president is seeking increased funds for the continued production of the Stealth bomber; two kinds of inter-

continental missiles, the MX and the Midgetman; and \$4.8 billion (up from \$3.8 billion) for the Star Wars space-based anti-missile system.

To give some semblance of military necessity to these requests, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney has stressed the "enormous uncertainty about the likely political developments in the Soviet Union in the months and years immediately ahead." And Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-KS), reacting to rumors about Gorbachov's possible resignation as head of the Communist Party, warned that such reports "ought to remind us how foolish it would be to gut our defenses on the assumption that Gorbachov would succeed."

But the reality is that if there ever was a Soviet military threat, it is now a thing of the past. With Gorbachov in power, demilitarization will continue apace. As it is now, Eastern Europe remains relatively friendly to the Soviet Union only out of gratitude to Gorbachov and his policy of *glasnost*, which made their peaceful revolutions possible. If Gorbachov is overthrown and an attempt to go back to the bad old days is made, the Soviet threat will not return. In fact, it will disintegrate even further, if that is possible. All of Eastern Europe will defect to the West and civil war will erupt in the Soviet Union. In such a situation, the Soviet hard-liners would be in no condition to fight a war and would have greater enemies at home than abroad.

In short, there is no rational reason for the Bush budget other than a greater loyalty to the arms manufacturers than to the American people. It's time to start spending our money on a genuine national defense—the defense of the well-being of all Americans. We need a kinder, gentler nation. We need a real education president—and a real environmentalist. We don't need a people held hostage by their military contractors.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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LETTERS

Trashing the military

PRESIDENT BUSH SAYS THERE WILL BE NO "PEACE dividend" from the Cold War's end. He is offering no new ideas for the '90s—no plan to scrap the Strategic Defense Initiative or any other costly weapons system. This means it is up to us to offer our own ideas for the new decade.

Here's mine: let the weaponers continue to produce but have Congress require that any weapon purchased after 1990 be made entirely of recycled materials—preferably materials salvaged from municipal waste. After you snicker, think of the benefits. One standard argument for a vigorous weapons industry has been the need for preparedness, keeping the expertise and production lines ready. This requirement would do that and also reduce U.S. dependency on foreign sources of strategic materials, which is a major bottleneck in production, often spawns theft and fraud and hobbles the State Department.

This requirement would stimulate recycling by opening a measurable market, and it would put the nation's research and engineering genius to work on processes that might result in technological breakthroughs more applicable to the entire economy than those promised by "Star Wars." Learning to utilize more of our garbage might even make us more competitive in the global marketplace.

Those of us who spent the '80s lobbying for a brake on the arms race could relax as troublesome tritium and plutonium production plants would not reopen; the arms race would slow. The nuclear freeze, endorsed by Congress years ago, might become a reality, yet our independence and ability to defend ourselves would be stronger in the long run. We might even have to shut down municipal waste incinerators in the interest of national security!

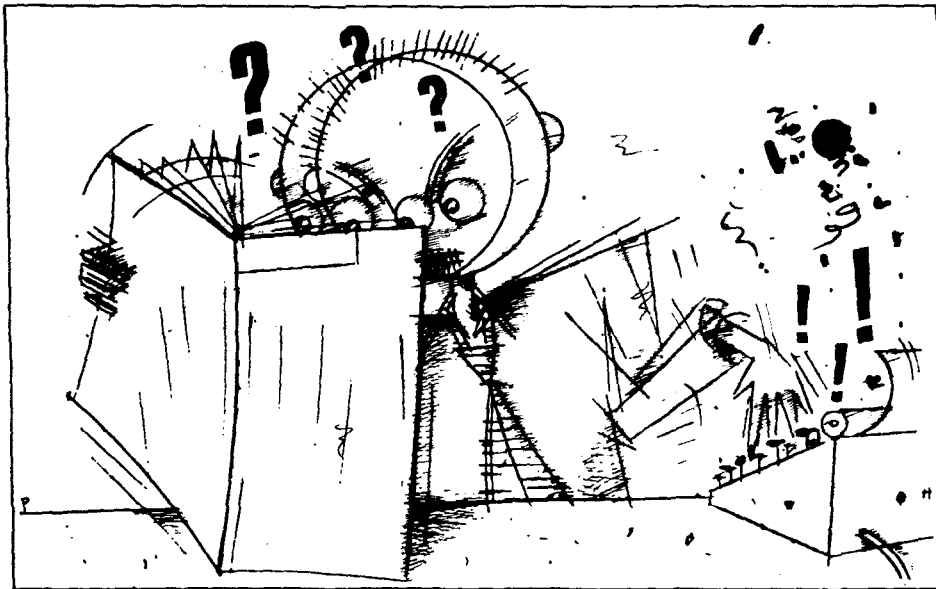
Marilyn Strasser
Mankato, Minn.

The real point

JOHAN JUDIS' ARTICLE ON GEORGE BUSH'S TRADE policy with Japan (*ITT*, Jan. 17) leaves the discussion of the trade issue trapped in free-market ideology. It acts as though the main point at issue in our trade policy with Japan is, or should be, whether Japan is placing barriers on the importation of U.S. goods into their market.

In fact, the question as to whether Japan is "unfairly" keeping U.S. goods out of its market is absolutely irrelevant in the formulation of U.S. trade policy. If we accept the conventional economist argument that free trade is always good, then the U.S. benefits from the opportunity to buy cheaper or better goods from Japan, and the fact that they don't let U.S. goods into their market would just mean that their own citizens suffer (this conventional argument assumes the U.S. economy always has full employment, so the question of the plight of unemployed workers is not an issue.)

If instead the issue is examined from a more realistic perspective, where such factors as unemployment and foreign debt enter the discussion, then the only factor of relevance in determining trade policy is how particular policies are likely to affect employment and economic growth. From



this standpoint it does not make one iota of difference whether U.S. goods are not sold in Japan because people in Japan don't want to buy them or because the Japanese government prohibits their sale. It is obviously necessary to factor in the Japanese response to any trade policy pursued by the U.S., but this is likely to be independent of the question of whether they already have barriers to the entry of U.S. goods.

It is essential to move discussions of trade policy among progressives away from the ideological realm of market worshippers. Within this realm the only alternatives are a "free trade" policy that has been very detrimental to the living standards of much of the U.S. population and a policy of retaliatory protectionism that is likely to make for bad economic policy and to be racist in its political manifestations. We have to be able to say that it may be necessary to alter trade policy toward Japan not because of anything they are doing that is wrong but simply because it is harmful to the U.S. economy and in particular to the living standards of the working class.

Only when the discussion passes beyond the fictitious world of free trade and the moralistic realm of fair trade will it be possible to make progress in formulating a progressive trade policy.

Dean Baker
Assistant professor of economics
Bucknell University
Winfield, Pa.

Good point

IAM HOPEFUL THAT BLACK FEMINISTS WILL RESPOND to Salim Muwakkil's contention (*ITT*, Dec. 20, 1989) that they should shelve their own life-and-death concerns in favor of the "more urgent matter" of the declining male marriageable pool. I limit myself to consideration of the cross-racial usage, appearing no fewer than five times in his arti-

cle, of "female-headed families" or families "headed by women."

No one has been able to deny or to escape the fact that this usage means that families where two adults, one of each gender, share responsibility, are headed by the male. This is blatant sexism, and I cannot fathom why this archaic, patriarchal usage continues to appear in an allegedly progressive publication. Alternatives such as "single-mother families" are not difficult or more wordy, and they avoid the quite unsubtle implication that a woman only "heads" a family when there is no man around.

Joan Walsh
Durham, N.C.

And another point

IAM A BIT UPSET BY THE INCONSISTENCIES AND possible bias of William Gasperini's reporting. He does, as Edward S. Herman (*Letters*, Jan. 17) had noted recently, take the mainstream point of view. In his recent report on Panama (*ITT*, Jan. 17), he points out that "some Panamanians"—seemingly a select minority—also share the mainstream media-U.S. State Department's position on the Panama invasion, implying that Ramsey Clark is a liar. (Perhaps he is, but Clarke's record is somewhat cleaner than that of the State Department.)

By the way, is Gasperini the same William Gasperini on CBS radio?

Brit Bunkley
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Editor's note: Yes, Gasperini also reports for CBS radio.

IBM

IN JOHN JUDIS' ARTICLE (*ITT*, JAN. 24), WITH ITS lament at the sun setting on U.S. dominance of the world's computer technology, there is a very mistaken assumption that IBM is still the "White Knight" of progress

in this industry. A clue to the real situation actually pops up in Judis' article itself, when, after hailing IBM as "the most farsighted of large U.S. corporations," the next paragraph reveals that the abandoned consortium's "plan was to use technology licensed from IBM."

As almost everyone on the functional side of computing knows, IBM's marketing strategy has dictated its technical decisions from the start. Innumerable technological breakthroughs have been derailed and blocked to protect its installed base and enforced compatibility. Only when the kitchen-table tinkerers moved out to their garages and produced their early prototypes did the compact, user-friendly products get past IBM out to the market and a new cycle of grasping investors.

No matter how upright and clean-shirted IBM appears in public, its bottom line has held the U.S. back. And corporate "leadership" as a whole was content and kept ordering IBM dinosaurs because their individual holdings of IBM stock kept rising in price and splitting regularly, until recently.

The lesson that Judis should have concluded with is not that "government-industry cooperation and planning has suffered a severe setback" but that all people who work for a living, creatively or productively or both, have to liberate themselves and our economies from the stranglehold of private corporate or public bureaucratic "planning."

It would be better if the next stage of international rivalry will set up a competition over who can best take care of their people and culture. For that, I believe we should look to the social "tinkerers" at the grass roots before we again exalt elites or vanguards.

Nat Mills
Montrose, N.Y.

Correction

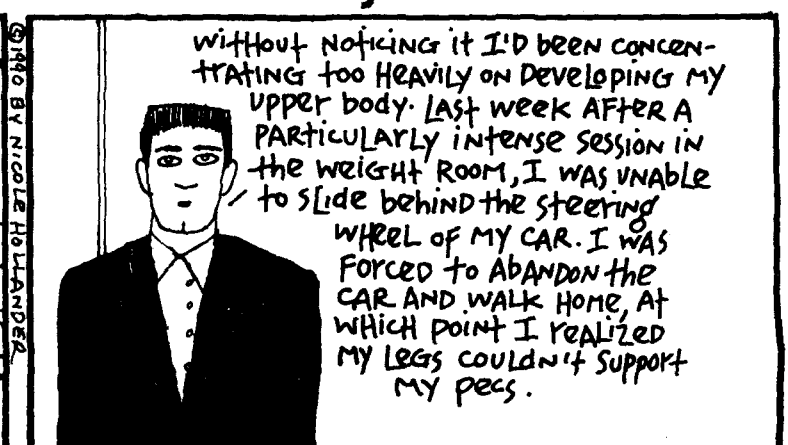
IN EDITING MY ARTICLE ON AZERBAIJAN (*ITT*, JAN. 31), two misleading elements crept in. First, the Baku Congress was not "a gathering of extremists": I try never to use the word "extremists"—Baku was a gathering of revolutionaries. Second, the concern of Iran and Turkey is that both are being drawn into backing the same side, the Azerbaijanis: it is not "a struggle between Moslems and Turks" but one in which Iran categorizes the Azerbaijanis as Moslems while Turkey sees them in nationalist terms.

Fred Halliday
London

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander



By Daniel Lazare

GORDON LEWIS' ACCOUNT OF THE LATEST events in East Berlin in the January 31 *In These Times* suffers from a certain cognitive dissonance—a polite way of saying it doesn't make sense.

Midway through his article, he declares that "the threat of right radicalism has existed for years" in the German Democratic Republic, "triggered by the gray hopelessness and depression known as 'real existent socialism.'" Then, a sentence or two later, he downgrades the threat to a mere "specter" invoked by the Gregor Gysi-Hans Modrow leadership as part of a desperate last-minute gamble to stay in power. Lewis describes a massive demonstration called by the Communists on January 13 to protest the trashing of the Soviet war memorial in East Berlin's Treptow district but then suggests that the Communist Socialist Unity Party (SED) may actually have vandalized the statue itself as a kind of a '90s update of the old Reichstag fire.

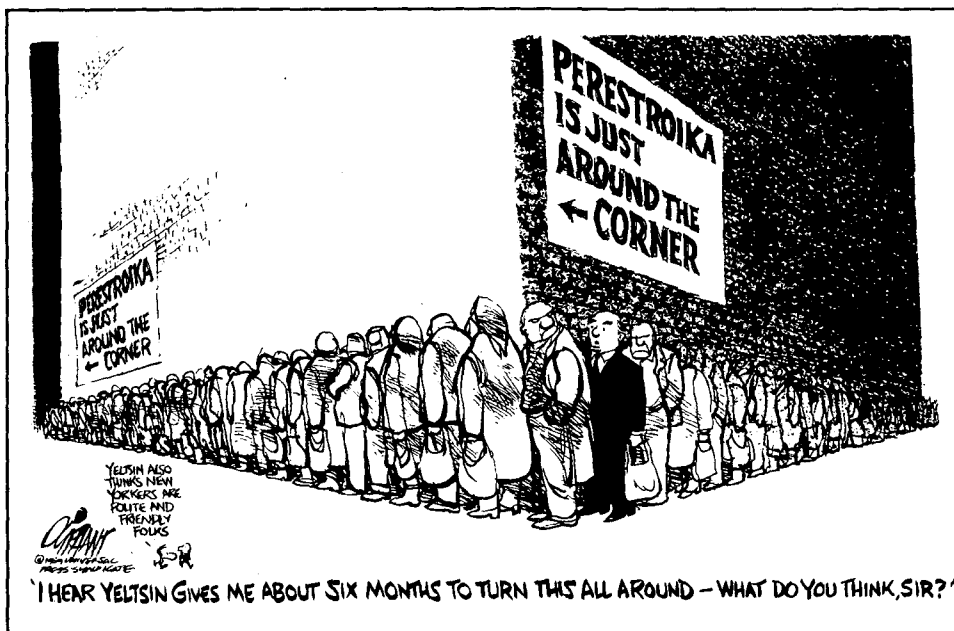
His evidence: the memorial is usually under heavy guard, which leads him to suspect the trashing was an inside job, while the painted-on slogans—"For a united Europe of fatherlands," etc.—strike him as stiff and formal, not at all the sort of thing he would expect a slanging, semiliterate skinhead to write. His conclusion: the Treptow incident was hoax to provide justification for the reactivation of the old East German secret police, the STASI.

The big chill: This is rather slim evidence on which to hang such a stunning charge, but in the end Lewis says it doesn't matter because Communist efforts to divide the left opposition from right-wing anti-Communists are going nowhere. "For the moment," he writes, "the opposition movements are united by one basic goal: defeat the SED-PDS. And after the events of the last weeks, that goal looks very attainable indeed."

Swell. This is about as reassuring as learning that leftists are uniting with right-wing nationalists to drive the Red Army out of Azerbaijan, or that dissidents are making common cause with Pamyat in the streets of Moscow.

In other words, it's downright chilling. Amazing as it is to have to point this out at this late date, right-wing resurgence in

East bloc left must unite to clip the right's wings



the Soviet bloc is not some late-Stalinist hoax or a minor irritant that will vanish as soon as the Communists step down. Quite the contrary, it's an explosive, immensely dangerous force stretching from Soviet Central Asia to the Baltics. In Baku, as Lewis may recall, right-wing Azerbaijani nationalists were until recently tossing elderly Armenian women off balconies. In Leningrad, Moscow and other cities, their Russian counterparts have begun spreading word that May 5 will be a day of anti-Jewish pogroms, while, in the Baltic States, nationalists are busy circumscribing the political rights of Russians and other "outsiders" and, according to the February 4 *New York Times*, threatening violence against Jews.

Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, wherever there is a border, nationalist tensions are flaring. Warsaw is alarmed over Bonn's half-restrained desire to shift the German-Polish border to the east in the event of German reunification. Hungary and Romania are in dispute over control of the Hungarian-speaking population of Transylvania. Moldavia wants to unite with Romania, where a mob nearly forced the banning of the

Communist Party recently, while anti-Turkish hatred is alive and well in Bulgaria. In Yugoslavia, Slovenes, Slovaks, Albanians, Montenegrins and who-knows-who-else are arming themselves for what seems to be shaping up as a general ethnic free-for-all.

Where is this leading? No one rightly knows, although the airy optimism expressed most recently by Noam Chomsky in *The Nation* and Todd Gitlin in *Peace & Democracy News* seems more and more unjustified. While it's conceivable that Mikhail Gorbachov may get his act together and stabilize the Soviet economy yet, everything

A united front involving workers of all nationalities would be a way of separating out legitimate national self-determination from the darker sectarian impulses at work in Azerbaijan, Russia and the Baltics.

to date—the deepening economic crisis, growing paralysis over the national question, political indecision, etc.—indicates that he won't. If so, the nationalist whirlwind unleashed by *perestroika* and *glasnost* will undoubtedly increase.

According to Alexander Yanov, the Soviet emigre author of *The Russian New Right* who recently returned from an extended stay in the Soviet Union, the situation in Moscow is ominous. The right wing is fractured among Stalinists, various rural romantics and out-and-out fascist storm troopers of the Pamyat variety, but it is coalescing rapidly. Meanwhile, center-left forces seem tired, cowed and thoroughly confused.

"The right is strong—as strong as I had predicted," Yanov said in a brief telephone chat. "They are capable of demoralizing not just the intelligentsia and the Jews but the highest echelons of the party. They've suc-

ceeded in creating an apocalyptic mood." The final showdown—Russia's own 1933—could, he calculated, be as little as a couple of years off.

Two or three years ago, the prospect of a fascist coup in Moscow, with the world's second-largest nuclear arsenal falling into the hands of characters straight out of a novel by Dostoyevsky, would have been nearly unthinkable. Today, it's impossible to dismiss. Despite Gorbachov's growing helplessness—the events of last week notwithstanding—an alternative does exist.

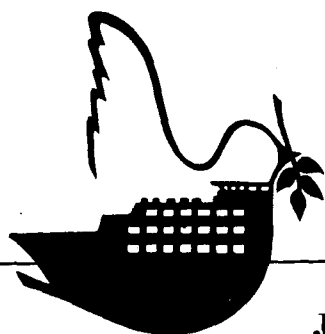
The right choice: It is the revitalization of socialism through top-to-bottom democratization. Rather than unchecked nationalism, it would mean a return to the original, pre-Stalinist principles of the Soviet Union as a free community of nations, in which the idea is not to leave national boundaries frozen in place—as they were for 60 years from Stalin to Brezhnev—but to transcend them and render them unimportant, much as boundaries between Swiss cantons or Italian provinces have been rendered unimportant today.

Instead of selling off state-owned enterprises to Western capitalists—one-shot stimulus that is about as progressive as privatizing Amtrak here in the U.S.—it would mean defending public ownership and reinvigorating industry through the as-yet-untried means of democratic, centralized control. Instead of leaving plant managers to fend for themselves, as Gorbachov has under *perestroika*, it would mean a return to the old socialist principle of democratic coordination from the worker on the shop floor to upper-level technocrats.

No doubt this sounds farfetched given the way events are proceeding in the Eastern Bloc, but with all other doors rapidly closing, it is the only thing worth fighting for. Meanwhile, a united front against fascism involving all forces of the left—precisely a united front of the sort endorsed by Gysi and Modrow that Lewis scorns as "an admission of defeat for a doctrinaire Communist"—would be an excellent start. The point would not be to let the Communists off the hook for their crimes or to provide them with a ready-made excuse for clinging to power. Rather, it is to recognize that the Communist Party is already halfway out the door and that it is time for leftists generally to unite against the far more pressing danger of an assault from the right.

A united front involving workers of all nationalities would be a way of separating out legitimate national self-determination from the darker sectarian impulses at work in Azerbaijan, Russia and the Baltics. Instead of the demoralized collapse into the arms of the Western powers (who have been doing their best to foster national dissension since the birth of the Soviet republic), it would recognize that revitalized socialism is the only way out of the current mess.

Nineteen thirty-three is not only the year Hitler took power but the year German Communists and Social Democrats failed to join forces against the right-wing threat. Lewis' eagerness to join forces with anyone and everyone against the Communists is equally myopic and sectarian. Wouldn't it be tragic if leftists faced with a right-wing resurgence in the '90s wind up making the same mistake twice?



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Indict the children and try them and their parents for perjury

Ray Buckey is a man whose life has already been effectively destroyed. The first charge of child abuse against this teacher at the McMartin infant school in Manhattan Beach, Calif., was laid against him in the summer of 1983. The allegations against him had been extorted from her two-year-old by a woman—now dead—with a history of mental illness who also claimed that an AWOL Marine had sodomized her dog.

It was not long before Buckey had direct experience of the dispassionate operations of the justice system. The Manhattan Beach Police Department sent a letter to 200 families whose children attended McMartin which read in part, "Photos may have been taken of the children without their clothing. Any information from your child ever having observed Ray Buckey to leave the classroom alone with a child during any nap period, or if they have ever observed Ray Buckey tie up a child, is important."

By the spring of 1984 Buckey, his mother, grandmother, sister and three fellow teachers had been arrested and the police claimed no fewer than 1,200 alleged victims of abuse. Briefly released, Buckey was rearrested and spent five years in jail. On January 18, after more than two years' trial, a jury acquitted Buckey and his mother on 52 counts of molestation. On 13 remaining counts of molestation and conspiracy against Ray Buckey the jury was deadlocked (though it seems a majority was convinced of his innocence) and a mistrial on these counts declared.

Any sane society would have permitted the Buckeys peace to recover as best they could from this horrible ordeal. A medieval village, having thrown a suspected witch into the local pond, would sometimes decide that she was not, in the last analysis, an instrument of Satan and would leave her to recover on the bank.

But on the analogy of the McMartin case, they would have thrown the suspect back in. On January 31 Los Angeles County District Attorney Ira Reiner announced that Ray Buckey would be retried on at least some of the 13 counts. The decision came after a period of grotesque agitation by the parents of the supposedly abused McMartin children. They appeared on talk shows, terrorized the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors into voting, 4 to 1, to urge the district attorney to a new trial and, if he did not, to call upon the state attorney general to take the decision out of Reiner's hands. This intervention in the justice system by the board, which obviously caused qualms even among the poltroons voting in the majority, seems to be virtually without precedent, and indeed it is hard to think of a case of equivalent political and psychological squalor.

First take the political squalor. Ira Reiner is running for the office of attorney general. He has, in the recent past, already lost a series of well-publicized cases. The McMartin verdict was another substantial reverse to his political fortunes. His opponent in the attorney general race is Arlo Smith, who won office in San Francisco by running Joe Freitas into the ground for losing the Dan White case. So Reiner could not afford to have Smith rampaging around the state of

ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

California accusing him of wimpishness for not tossing Ray Buckey into the witch's pen once more.

Reiner was presumably under tremendous pressure from Attorney General John Van de Kamp to retry Buckey. Van de Kamp is running for governor and vividly remembers what happened to him when he, then district attorney in Los Angeles County, decided to try Angelo Buono Jr., the "Hillside Strangler," on a lesser count because he thought there was insufficient evidence to assure a murder conviction. The judge rejected his decision and turned the case over to then-Attorney General George Deukmejian, whose office won a murder conviction.

So here we have two men with tremendous incentives to put Buckey back in the dock—in an atmosphere so polluted with hysteria that it must be doubtful whether any panel of jurors could be decently assembled to assure Buckey a fair trial. For their part, the members of the board of supervisors were keenly aware, as is any ambitious politician in California, that public sentiment was strongly resentful of the jury's acquittal of the Buckeys on all but the 13 counts.

So much for the political squalor. The psychological squalor is even more disturbing. The McMartin case was but one in nearly 40 outbursts across the country between 1983 and 1987 in which prosecutions against teachers or supervisors in infant schools were prompted by children's accusations. Many of these accusations, taken seriously by parents and the justice system, were of the most fantastic nature. McMartin children said they had been marched to cemeteries to dig up bodies. One child said he saw his teacher fly and another said Ray Buckey had killed a horse with a baseball bat.

Society seems to have a periodic need for these witch trials.

In 1984 in Sacramento, children said they had watched snuff movies and cannibalism. In 1985 children in Pennsylvania said teachers had forced them to have oral sex with a goat. In 1986 children in a preschool in Sequim, Washington, said they had been made to watch animal sacrifice in a graveyard. In Chicago the kids said they had watched a baby being boiled.

Terrible injustices were done in this extraordinary replay of the 17th-century Salem witch trials. People were tossed into prison for years on the say-so of infants. In all 50 states children as young as two or three can testify to abuse without corroboration from adults and without physical evidence. In many states they can make their charges without having to endure cross-examination, being bounced up and down on a judge's knee in private chambers. In some states the charges can merely be repeated as heresy by adults.

Imagine, dear reader, that you were suddenly placed under arrest as a child abuser and told that your accuser was a two-year-old who, on the account of a social worker, had nodded assent when she suggested—manipulating dolls—to him that you had stuck a screwdriver up his behind and then

made him watch while you blew up a hamster. Remember, your lawyer cannot cross-examine this child and later you find that the child—perhaps now four years older—had retracted the charges but was persuaded by parent or social worker or "therapist" that his retraction was prompted by shame and that it was psychologically essential for the child to have his day in court. Remember, you could go to jail for 20 years.

You think I'm joking about the hamster? Here's a conversation with a child by an investigator in a case in Memphis:

Mother: *How did the hamster explode? Was it stuck with a knife?*

Boy: *No, she [Mrs. Ballard] put a bomb in it.*

Mother: *Was it a firecracker?*

Boy: *No, it sounded like it.*

Mother: *Are you sure the hamster was real?*

Boy: *Yes, I saw it and it moved. We could not touch it.*

Mother: *Was there blood?*

Boy: *Yes.*

Mother: *How did she clean it up?*

Boy: *With a broom.*

Mrs. Ballard is still in prison, supposedly for kissing a four-year-old on his penis. She was acquitted on many other absurd allegations.

What was the reason for this wave of self-evidently preposterous stories about satanic rituals at infant schools and other tales of ritual abuse?

Society seems to have a periodic need for these witch trials, whether at Salem or the McCarthy hearings. At the center of the Reagan era there weren't really any Communists around to persecute, so the hunt went back to the traditional exorcism of Satan, whose horns and cloven feet assumed the form of your local day-care teacher.

The '80s also brought the great onslaught against Freud, arguing against oedipal fantasy and in favor of the reality of physical abuse. The women's movement had a good deal to do with this. (It also has a good deal to be ashamed about in its cowardice in dealing with cases like McMartin. Mothers in the home abuse children—not nearly as much as fathers, but it does happen. Didn't Hedda Nussbaum deserve just a bit of blame when her demented partner in New York threw the child against the wall?) These

days everyone likes to claim that they were "abused" as a child. It's a way of absolving yourself for screwing up, shifting the blame back to a time of infancy when you can't be blamed for anything. From these gymnastics, by which "therapists" make their money, the adult emerges guilt-free.

Also the charges were quintessentially Reaganite in that they took child abuse out of the family, which is where 90 percent of it occurs, and put it into day-care centers that, in the Schlaflyite scheme of things, are an abode of Satan anyway.

Again, some parents probably feel a fair amount of guilt for dumping their children in day-care centers anyway and are obviously, by way of compensation, ready to leap passionately to the "defense" of their children. I put the word "defense" in quotation marks because any considerate parent or sane therapist (as opposed to the hysterical self-promoters who mostly feature in these cases) would realize that months and years of interrogation and court procedures are the very last things a child needs after a genuine case of abuse. The public investigation and litigation merely magnify the hurt.

The trouble is that these parents now have a huge emotional investment in "the case," whether it be the McMartin or similar episodes. Indeed in some of these court trials the parents also have a strong material interest, in the form of very substantial awards by insurance companies who cover infant schools in the event of such charges being made against them.

So now the McMartin parents can triumphantly torture poor Ray Buckey all over again, abetted by the cowards in the justice system. But if people can be persecuted and prosecuted on the word of children, then children should take responsibility for what they are saying. If a child says he saw Ray Buckey kill a horse with a baseball bat (which one did) and if this charge is disproved (which one was), then the child should be indicted for perjury. If a parent supported the child in this false accusation and can be shown to have abetted it, then the parent should be indicted for perjury too. If the court then establishes that parent and child were lying, they should be sent to jail, just as so many of their victims have been.

A few well-publicized cases of imprisonment of children and parents (along with "therapists" and social workers, it goes without saying) and we would see an end to these disgusting miscarriages of justice. Indict the children, and their parents with them!

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Bork's notion of framers' 'original intent' smells like big frameup

The Tempting of America
By Robert H. Bork
Free Press, 432 pp., \$22.50

By Eric Foner

ROBERT BORK'S *THE TEMPTING of America* is a revelation, but not the kind the author intended. Combining a highly selective review of the Supreme Court's history, a critique of contemporary legal thought and an account of the 1987 fight over his own nomination to the court, it reveals Bork as a tendentious and shallow mind given to reducing complex political, legal and moral issues to simplistic slogans.

The temptation alluded to in Bork's title is the lure of politics,

CONSTITUTION

which, he contends, has lately infiltrated institutions from the courts to the academy. Like Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bork imagines a pre-'60s golden age when teachers, lawyers and journalists pursued their callings innocent of politics and ideology. Anyone even slightly acquainted with the history of these callings, or who has read Ellen Schrecker's account of McCarthyism in the universities (*No Ivory Tower*), will realize how ludicrous Bork's account is.

Intentional fallacies: As for the courts, Bork reiterates the familiar



SHIA photo, Impact Visuals

right-wing complaint that judges have strayed from interpreting the Constitution in order to enact their own political views into law. The Supreme Court's proper role, he asserts, is simply to determine and apply "the objective meaning that constitutional language had when it was adopted."

It soon becomes clear, however,

that the call for a jurisprudence of "original intent" is less a carefully reasoned principle than a political rallying cry, a justification for undoing modern Supreme Court decisions that have broadened the definition of constitutional rights.

At times, in Bork's account, the Constitution offers a definitive answer to legal questions; at others, it provides little more than "a major premise" from which judges should reason (a position not unlike that of the liberals Bork attacks). Bork would entirely ignore some parts of the Constitution (such as the Ninth Amendment, which guarantees rights not specifically mentioned elsewhere in the document) and would interpret others in ways the founders never dreamed of (like the clause guaranteeing each state a republican form of government).

In an age of deconstruction, there is something quaint in Bork's naive idea that a text like the Constitution can be reduced to a single "objective" meaning. But Bork's argument

really falls apart when he tries to apply his "method" to actual constitutional questions, past and present.

If "original intent" is to have any meaning, it requires a careful examination of the beliefs of the framers who wrote the Constitution, the congressmen who approved its amendments and the legislators who ratified them. It also demands familiarity with the historical context, the political assumptions that gave meaning to constitutional language.

Amazingly, Bork cites few historical works and no actual sources. Of crucial episodes in American history he displays a profound ignorance. Yet he confidently makes historical judgments based on nothing more than his own prejudice.

Bork roast: Take, for example, the 14th Amendment. Adopted during Reconstruction, this established the principle of equality before the law for all citizens and gave the federal government broad powers of enforcement. The amendment was intended both to erase nearly a century of jurisprudence based on slavery and discrimination and to force the states to recognize the fundamental rights of all Americans. Congress couched these aims in general language—"due process of law," "equal protection of the laws"—precisely to allow future lawmakers and federal judges to define and protect citizens' rights.

Ignoring the amendment's broad wording and a historical record that

makes clear the framers' desire to embed in the Constitution a statement of general principle, Bork insists the amendment has little real meaning other than to invalidate state laws discriminating against blacks. It has no bearing, he insists, on other Americans and does not impose upon the states the same obligation to respect basic liberties as the Bill of Rights established for the federal government.

People who find state law oppressive, Bork says, should not go to court; they should "vote with their feet" and move to some other state. Not only does Bork's position display a remarkable insensitivity to individual rights but it has nothing to do with the "intent" of the men who drafted and ratified the 14th Amendment.

If Bork the jurist succumbs again and again to sloppy thinking, Bork the spurned nominee indulges in a peculiar combination of self-aggrandizement and self-pity. Excessive modesty is certainly not Bork's problem: he says he wanted the Supreme Court seat in order to demonstrate to his benighted colleagues "the proper method of judging." His nomination was intended not to add another conservative vote to the court but to restore it to "the design of the American Republic." But President Reagan's altruism fell victim to a conspiracy of "left activists" who somehow control the media, the universities and the Democratic Party.

This, it seems, is Bork's real target: not the judges who, in his view, have been making wrong decisions for nearly two centuries but the "left-liberal culture" that supposedly dominates American life. Like Bloom, he seems obsessed with the sexual revolution and by feminism. Bork demands the repeal of *Roe vs. Wade* not only on "original intent" grounds but because legal abortion reflects the spirit of "untrammeled individualism" and "moral relativism in sexual matters."

Bork has been hailed as a major intellectual of the right. But, like Bloom, he actually panders to the complacency and anti-intellectualism of the Reaganite middle class. Bork assures his readers that they do not have to take new ideas—from critical legal studies to deconstruction and feminism—seriously. Indeed, there is no need for any hard thinking on constitutional issues. Old premises and prejudices will suffice.

With *The Tempting of America*, the case is closed and only one verdict is possible: Robert Bork is utterly unqualified to sit on the Supreme Court.

Eric Foner is DeWitt Clinton professor of history at Columbia University. A *Short History of Reconstruction*, an abridged edition of his prize-winning account of the Reconstruction period, has just been published.

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**Bork displays a
profound ignorance
of American history
and makes
judgments based
solely on his own
prejudice.**

By Doug Smith

THE LIFE OF CHRIST, FROM THE miraculous conception to the tragic execution, dominates much of Western art. In that tradition, with its Adorations of the Magi and Stations of the Cross, the story has been idealized by artists of every century. But for the most part, cartoonists have given it a wide berth.

Which leaves Winnipeg cartoonist Bob Haverluck a relatively clear field. And in his recent show, *When God Was Flesh and Wild: A host of cartoons, tragic and comic, revealing the Bible as bad news to the mighty and the bossy*, Haverluck uses his lyric talent to play across this field with wild abandon. His Mary is a large, rough peasant woman who in the middle of her pregnancy smiles as she "enjoys her secret." Christ has a broken nose, matted hair and outrages "the protectors of morality and might" by getting down on his hands and knees and smooching with a pig. And in some drawings the crucified Christ lies splayed out across a businessman's tie.

As Haverluck wryly notes, "Tradition surrounding the life of Christ operates on the idea that we honor things by idealizing them." His work, as the show's title suggests, attempts to give Christ back his humanity—and his political punch.

"I think that, properly understood, the biblical narratives for the most part are quite subversive of authority and concentrations of power. So the connection between the Christmas story and the rise of kings and the victimage and points of resistance to victimage seem to me to be a subtext for the politics that goes on."

A twisting line: Now in his mid-40s, Haverluck came to cartooning through the most circuitous of routes. Born in rural Manitoba, he moved to Winnipeg when the local high school principal explained to him that if he came back the following year he would be kicked out of school. Once safely through high school, he embarked on a course of studies—philosophy and political science—that set him on the road to becoming a United Church minister.

Although he was immersed in the study of Marx—and was close friends with a number of prominent Marxist scholars at university—Haverluck says his politics are rooted in his observations of justice and injustice in his hometown. "I had an appreciation for some of the old Ukrainian folks. There were also some Indian people I got to know. There was a sense of asking, 'Why are these people getting pissed on?' from that I got a sense of the way racism works, of the way capitalism works. It was from those very ordinary experiences."

On his way to the ministry he died in England, where his politics and his sense of humor were influenced by the theories of cultural analysis developed by Welsh



Haverluck drawn to a heretical humanity

novelist and social critic Raymond Williams. After being ordained in 1971, Haverluck worked in a number of rural Manitoba communities before going back to school to work on his doctoral thesis. But instead of writing his thesis, he became deeply involved with an interchurch committee publicizing the plight of Indian bands whose land was being flooded by huge hydro-electric projects. As part of his work on this issue he drew a number of cartoons for university newspapers.

His involvement with native issues led him to the Prairie Christian Training Center in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, where he worked for six years. There he taught courses on racism, prairie culture and clowning—usually a series of dark monologues. And his work also required him to spend a lot of time in meetings. "I found myself doing a lot of doodling. Any time I would go to a meeting I would take along paper; then I started buying books of cartoons." He was beginning to find the form for his humor.

"I always knew the comedy was there, but I always felt it was cheap. But through the political stuff I began to discover that comedy could have a place. I went over to England to meet with some comedy writers who I thought were doing this kind of stuff." He met with playwright Trevor Griffiths as well as the writers of *Steptoe and Son* (which translated to *Sanford and Son* in the U.S.) and the BBC's Tony Hancock comedies. "It became apparent that I could be doing more with the comedy stuff and other people could be in the parish; other people could be teaching the adult education stuff. I had finally discovered the form."

Word-heavy tracts: It is only in the last few years that Haverluck has been able to devote himself to car-

toon on a full-time basis. In that period he's succeeded in selling work to Britain's *New Statesman* and *Harper's* in the U.S. His drawings also show up regularly in the *Ploughshares Monitor*, *This Magazine*, *The United Church Observer* and the *National Catholic Reporter*. His work has also received support from the Canada Council.

Even though his work appears in a number of left-wing publications, he jokes that, while the left talks a lot about the importance of culture, it is still fairly impatient with the directions of art. "There is something of the 19th-century Methodist in methodology of the left. Like the British Methodists, the left still focuses on word-heavy tracts."

For a very funny guy, Haverluck is deadly serious about humor. A fact that isn't all that surprising once you discover he wrote his thesis on Kierkegaard, comedy and community. "In our culture art is expected to be entertainment. It is one of the terrible things a cartoonist has to deal with—cartoons are supposed to be on the funny pages." To Haverluck this means we have lost touch with the rich comic traditions of everyday life.

Haverluck's at times fierce and scatological sense of humor (one series on business culture traces the career of someone making his way up the corporate ladder by starting as a Catchfart) is offset by works portraying a genuine sense of gentleness and vision that evoke a sense of solidarity. "My assumption is that we don't need assurances that things are going to work out or that things are going to be successful politically, but we really need a strong sense of being in company with others. I can put up with a lot of shit if I know I am not alone. I don't need to know if it is going to work out. But what I

cannot bear very well is that it doesn't matter to others, that one is not part of a tradition, either living or dead."

Much of Haverluck's work is a reclamation project—bringing Christ back into that tradition. In some of his writing he suggests there was a streak of stand-up comic in Christ, particularly the Christ of the parables. "There was a lot of encouragement to take all of Christ's parables as lofty stuff. Because comedy has to be frivolous and Christ could not be frivolous. But what do you have here? You have a peasant growing up in the northern part of Palestine, where they send missionaries from Jerusalem. His vocabulary would be rich. You would expect peasant speech to be rich."

"Then scholars get at it, with no sense of the community it comes out of, and they take the humor out of it. The parables are consistently super-exaggerations. For me, it is ordinary speech. I am just reclaiming the ordinarieness of it all. Some people say, 'You must be making fun of it because you are making it ordinary.' No, no, no. The joke is on us

for expecting it to be other than ordinary. Mary is not a princess—she is a peasant woman with big mitts. What do you expect? She probably spent most of her life picking stones. I am trying to reclaim our companionship with these people who struggled against the political structures."

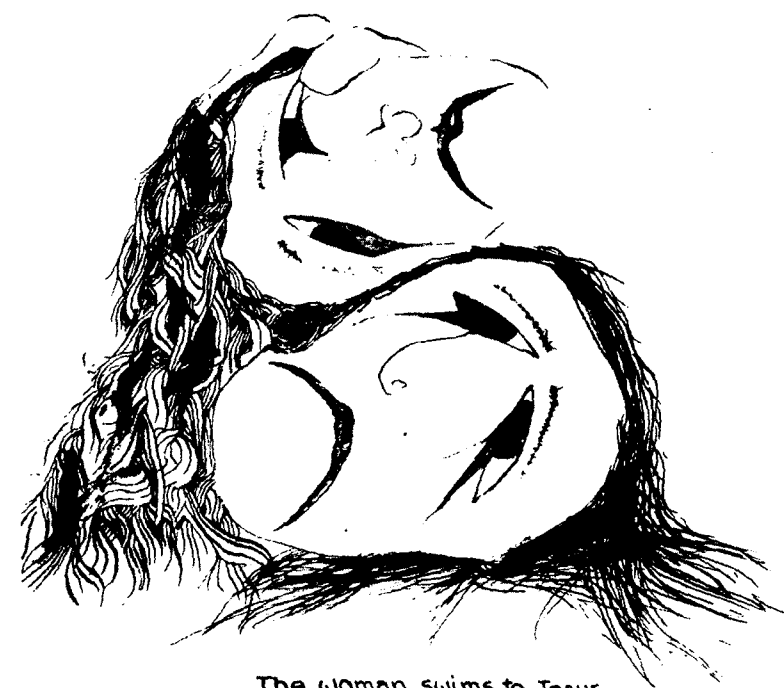
The theory and the ideas behind comedy and cartooning are very important to Haverluck. One of his latest projects is to develop a liber-

HUMOR

ation theology for comic art. "I want to do something to get people thinking, not only about art as progressive but as reactionary." He is also going to be publishing two books in the coming year: *Love Your Enemies and Other Neighbors*—a book of his writings that will include 50 drawings—and *Peace: Perspectives on Peace-Conflict*.

Doug Smith is a Winnipeg writer and broadcaster.

Bob Haverluck can be contacted at 59 Scotia St., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2W 3W6.



The woman swims to Jesus on her tears, and he swims out to meet her.

Stella
Directed by John Erman

By Pat Aufderheide

IF YOU'VE EVER SEEN *STELLA DALLAS*—the 1937 version with Barbara Stanwyck—just thinking about it can choke you up. A sharp-eyed mill girl on the make seduces the runaway heir to a fortune. Infatuated with her innocence of high-class ways and her drive to escape her class, he marries her. But she can't buck her class origins. They separate, and the mill girl raises their daughter alone.

When she sees that her crude manners, crass taste and loud friends jeopardize her child's future, she selflessly lets the girl rejoin her father. Of course the girl won't go, and Stella has to force her out by

FILM

seeming to be the kind of person that people think she is. At the movie's end, everyone in the audience is in happy tears with Stella as she stands outside in the rain, watching through the window of a mansion her daughter's wedding to a prep-school boy.

Stella, the all-too-faithful remake starring Bette Midler, produces more guffaws than tears. And unfortunately people are mostly laughing at her, not with her.

But it's not all her fault. As the laughter builds, you can even feel as sorry for Bette as you did in the King Vidor version for the pathetic *Stella Dallas*, humiliating herself in front of the fancy toffs.

Two classes, two worlds: The 1937 film—already a remake of a 1925 silent film, also taken from a novel and the progenitor of a radio soap opera—was already a kind of pop cultural fossil of class relations. It married two myths of American class: you can rise out of your class, and you can't. It portrayed a class structure in which the industrial working class and the owning class were the whole world of class relations. They were firmly defined and culturally and politically worlds apart. When *Stella Dallas* shoves her daughter out of the nest, we admire her sacrifice because it's necessary. And somehow her daughter will make it, even though Stella can't.

Bridging the huge sociological gap and plot implausibilities in *Stella Dallas* is an emotional game with the audience. In the first third of the movie Stella is repellent and grasping. In the second third she's pathetic. In the final third she's a martyr. Our tears flow because we forgive her and feel bad for having judged her so harshly.

Fifty-three years later, much has changed in American class relations. Of course much has stayed the same: we still have our myths of class mobility, even though statistics show

there is no more mobility in the U.S. than in Europe. But in the intervening years, popular culture—McDonalds, Madonna, MTV—has created a common language across class divisions. Post-World War II affluence gave families of industrial workers a small but significant piece of the pie. Ownership has been broadly diffused. And a sizable professional class has grown up, without real financial security but with great pretensions to a classless gentility.

From Bette to worse: As far as the makers of *Stella* are concerned, none of this ever happened. And as a result, poor Bette Midler plays a strong character in a series of implausible situations, which makes her look not the melodramatic victim but simply ridiculous.

Screenwriter Robert Getchell, who wrote such strong scripts as *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and *Bound for Glory*, collaborated on *Stella* with Samuel Goldwyn Jr. But the real credit should go to the King Vidor version, because the structure—and much of the dialogue—is drawn directly from it.

True, this time around *Stella* is an aggressive single mother who—out of a fierce pride—never marries the kidney specialist who impregnates her. (It must be noted, however, that she's a single mom who rarely experiences, on screen, basic problems of single moms such as day-care difficulties and loneliness.)

Stella is never an unsympathetic character, and Midler is often funny. Midler has her best moment early in the film when, as the rowdy bartender, she does a spectacular bump

and grind on the bar counter. A later food fight also brings out her capacity to clown. The film is given currency with a slew of (presumably lucrative) commercial references from Continental Airlines to Parkway to Cap'n Crunch.

In the basic plot line, this film never left 1937—and the film does contortions to justify its fidelity. The kidney specialist manages to marry a woman who had earlier married into money and thereby lives in a rarified elite world. The claustrophobic propriety of a small mill town must be carried by a matron who is a caricature of snobbishness (Eileen Brennan); she manages to turn the girl's friends against her overnight. And Stella, in order to be as socially reprehensible as in the original (while still endearing from the start to the audience, as is ob-

ligatory in Hollywood's star-centered funding system), must be idiosyncratic, an offbeat sprite, and not just a victim of her class origins.

Stella also meticulously preserves, as if in aspic, aspects of the 1937 version that no longer fit reality. For instance, Stella here sews her daughter's clothes as she did in the 1937 version—it's a symbol of her devotion—although Zayre's these days would offer far more appealing stuff at working-class prices.

Not ready for prime time: It's too bad that director John Erman—whose background is in TV movies—didn't draw more from the best in television. *Stella* is neither fast-paced nor consistent in tone. It does have the maudlin ring of TV's social-issue-of-the-week films, though.

In the end, mom's sacrificial act doesn't convince. Stella is kooky, but

that doesn't seem like enough to ruin her daughter's chances of getting married to a nice boy. And if it is, then God help her daughter, who's into Madonna and new-wave hairstyles. But then, there are probably plenty of future stockbrokers who are, too.

Yes, there are still class divisions in America. But one of the characteristics of our class structure is denial of its existence. That may be a myth, but it's part of the fabric of popular culture. How poignant a modern-day *Stella Dallas* might have been if it had transformed instead of embalming the old script—maybe even exposing the myth of eternal middle-classness. Instead, all you can say is, poor Stella, poor Bette.

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Midler's less than stellar star vehicle



English teachers' Kids having fun



By J. Poet

Rudder on course

EACH YEAR AT CARNIVAL TIME, the streets of Port of Spain, Trinidad, explode with music as the island's calypso singers vie with one another for the title of Calypso King. In 1986, the first time David Rudder entered the fray, his tune "The Hammer" won him the title of Young King of Carnival (best new performer), Calypso King (best performer) and Road March King (best song). Another of his compositions, "Bahia Girl," won second place in the Road March competition.

This unprecedented feat, capturing four of Carnival's top honors,

MUSIC

made Rudder the most successful calypso singer and composer Trinidad and Tobago have seen in 30 years. (The last person to capture two titles was the Mighty Sparrow, and that was back in the early '50s.) Rudder's quadruple crown caused so much jealousy that in 1988 the singer announced his intention to refrain from further Carnival competition. "My job now is to take calypso to the rest of the world."

"To people in the States, Calypso means Harry Belafonte," Rudder explains, "but the tradition goes back to slavery days. Calypso makes use



of African rhythms, jazz, British and French folk music, rock'n'roll and popular styles from neighboring islands like Haiti and Guadalupe. In the early days, before people could read, calypsos were the newspapers of the black community. The singers commented on politics, made up satirical songs about the slave masters and helped keep resistance alive."

Rudder was originally inspired by soul musicians. He says Stevie Wonder was an early idol "probably because he was handicapped. [Rudder

has a slight limp from a childhood bout with polio.] He overcame his blindness with music, so I decided I shouldn't let anything stand in my way." Rudder says his love of American soul music stayed strong until "I heard some of the early calypsonians, men like Attila the Hun. That's when I realized that calypso could make use of soul, jazz, salsa or whatever I wanted. And calypso has a lyrical freedom you don't find [in other music]."

That freedom can be puzzling to people who weren't raised in the

calypso tradition. Singers often make comments about the political or sexual lives of public figures that would be considered slanderous elsewhere. On occasion governments have been toppled because of the overwhelming public response to a vicious parody, but the singers remained immune to prosecution because of their popularity. "Men in Trinidad are very macho," Rudder explains. "If you're a public figure and someone makes fun of you, you've got to take it 'like a man' or you'll lose face. In the '30s and '40s, the ruling class *did* attempt to censor the singers, but there were riots so they had to give up and accept it."

Rudder grew up in Belmont, a working-class neighborhood outside of Port of Spain. The house next door was a "pan yard" (headquarters of a steel band), so Rudder's head was full of calypso from an early age. "People in Trinidad are open to all kinds of music—salsa, compas, zouk. I found that kind of international musical outlook very attractive."

Rudder taught himself guitar and began writing songs for Charlie's Roots, a band fronted by his friend Tambu (Chris Herbert). "Chris had writer's block and asked me for a few songs. Then in '86 he had laryngitis, so he asked me to sing for Carnival." The rest, as they say, is his-

tory. Today Rudder and Herbert share vocal chores in the band, not to mention most of the prizes at Carnival time. Rudder won the King's crown in '87 for "Haiti," while Tambu's "This Party Is It" won the Road March crown. A European record deal with Polydor Records (Sire, in the U.S.) followed.

Rudder's current release, *The Power and the Glory*, continues this search for an international beat by combining a global musical and political outlook, but even a worldwide vision can be problematic.

"In '87 I wrote two songs about Caribbean politics—'Haiti' and 'Panama.' At first," Rudder says with a laugh, "people wanted to know why I was concerned about these countries. After Haiti blew up and Noriega's cocaine connection made news, people began accusing me of going to an obeah man [witch doctor] to find out the future."

"I want to make calypso an international music, make people realize that it's an art form. Caribbean musicians like Kassav' [the band from Guadalupe that's the top-selling group in the Caribbean and most of the Third World] have combined Latin, African and North American styles without losing their integrity. I think calypso can do it too." ■

J. Poet is a critic living in Berkeley, Calif.

Lear: from monarch to matriarch

King Lear

Adapted & directed by Lee Breuer
Mabou Mines

By Margaret Spillane

IMAGINE WALKING INTO THE SISTINE Chapel to find that Michelangelo's fresco *The Creation* had been radically transformed: God's beard is gone, and he's become a she with cascades of streaming gray hair. With that same gesture God the Mother extends an omnipotent finger to invent Eve, her first human.

In Mabou Mines' newest production an equally hoary icon of Euroculture has undergone such a sex change: Shakespeare's *King Lear* has been dethroned and replaced by a 20th-century woman. But Mabou Mines' *Lear* isn't icon-smashing; it's art restoration. (See preview story, *In These Times*, Jan. 31.) By reworking *Lear* from monarch to matriarch, director Lee Breuer succeeds in abolishing the Parnassian distance usually afforded such "timeless" art—a distance regularly achieved by accents and lavish costumes from another, and implicitly "nobler," time than ours.

What's clear once that distance is abolished is that Shakespeare's play is not really very much about kings at all—it's about the vanity, covetousness and megalomania that can make the family the most dangerous

place to take shelter. That's why one of the production's broadest strokes—moving the action to the American South—is also one of its most bracing. Probably no other region of America has maintained such a dominating sense of the family as a political and social entity for citizens of European and African origin. So it's no mere gimmick that Lear (Ruth Maleczek) becomes the matriarch of a white family in Smyrna, Ga., in the late '50s, and Gloucester (Isabell Monk) her African-American counterpart.

Cutting the cake: And what an opening scene! It's Lear's birthday; she sashays into the middle of a barbecue held in her honor, where her sharkskin-suited sons Goneril (Bill Raymond), Regan (Ron Vawter) and Cordelion (Lute Ramblin') serenade her with rockabilly guitar and drums and neighbors sway to the music and suck down bottles of beer. Lear is accompanied by her Fool, a drag queen dressed in a midriff-baring top and short-shorts trimmed with ball fringe.

A birthday cake is brought forth which Lear carves in three—just moments before she's to divide her property among her three good ol' boys. Goneril and Regan profess their outsize and unending filial love; Lear asks Cordelion, her youngest and most beloved, how well he loves he. He answers not with a flourish

but a belch—because his love for her is a comfortable and familiar thing, not some colossus erected for the occasion. So Cordelion is banished—as is Kent (Lola Pashalinski), a woman in his mother's entourage who leaps to defend the boy's honesty. In a flash the elder brothers

THEATER

have appropriated the whole of their mother's holdings.

Meanwhile, the white-skinned Elva (Ellen McEluff), bastard child of Gloucester, is cooking up a plot to strip both her mother and her legitimate half-sister Edna (Karen Evans-Kandel) out of their property. In short order both Edna and Gloucester swell the numbers of those who only recently felt secure in their rights to a roof over their heads but who now wander in wild weather with neither material resources nor defenses against the predatory forces that surround them.

What follows is further proof of the wisdom behind those shifts of gender, era and class. The spectacle of these wanderers scrambling to get a toehold on the wilderness where they've been cast eloquently demonstrates how easily people—and especially women—can slip through the fragile web of economic security. Furthermore, the lynching of the

Fool (Greg Mehrten) and the blinding of Gloucester make brutally clear the perils that still await the sexual renegade or the woman who lays claim to political or economic power.

This is not a flawless production. I wish the cast had laid on the accent even more unabashedly: the rich Shakespearean vocabulary really dances to that Southern mouth music. This may be a minor casualty of the major technical revamping Breuer performed on *Lear*: to keep five hours of script within a three-hour framework Breuer treated the play like a movie, getting rid of its five-act format and gliding one sequence into another.

It costs the production a few delectable moments. Last April in a workshop version, for example, Clove Galilee spoke her lines as France with the honeyed, thorny indolence of a Dixieland Jessica Lange. In the current production, that sultriness gets sacrificed as her lines get hurried along.

Primordial issues: The cinematic effects seem shaped to create a tableau of geography and of clan, traits of individual souls twisted in conspiracy or anguish. This way the issues—not the personalities—stay primordial. The faces of those coluding outdoors on a summer night are hit with hardly more light than the trees or fenceposts nearby; their

voices emerge flickeringly against a wall of cricket sounds. But light can affect an audience's ability to hear: sometimes the shadows seem to eat up the voices while depriving the audience of an opportunity to watch an ugly emotion tighten over a face like a mask.

I was troubled to see that a particularly elegant and explicit scene of lesbian eroticism, included in the workshop last spring, has been greatly subdued. I hope the decision to alter the scene was based on artistic judgment and not terror of defunding. But I fear the long shadow of the Jesse Helms sex police may have fallen across another brave piece of art.

Thankfully, these flaws are more than outweighed by the gifts of a risk-taking, resourceful director and acting ensemble. It is the genius of Ruth Maleczek, however, that galvanizes *Lear* with a core of ardor, humor and grace. Her fierce fire allows this *Lear* to swing audaciously from tenderness to violence without ever striking a false note. In an instant, Maleczek can transform her sweetly indulgent expression into a mask of ravaged imprecating furor straight out of Goya or Blake. Her collapse into Alzheimer-like helplessness is heartbreaking and magnificent. For two decades Maleczek has been the great secret treasure of the American stage. *Lear* should let the secret out forever. ■

Margaret Spillane, former associate editor of the *New Haven Independent*, writes frequently about theater.

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Puerto Rico

Continued from page 13

falls below the federal poverty guideline—and that makes up the PNP's electoral base—would be exempt from taxation in the U.S. anyway.

The PIP, long barred from an active role in government by its poor electoral performance, looks toward the plebiscite as a possible watershed event. Its supporters argue that a likely win by statehood advocates would weaken commonwealth support, and an equally likely rejection of statehood by Congress would redefine the entire status debate.

Made in America: If Puerto Rican politics seem byzantine, it should come as no surprise. Thanks to decades of colonial and neocolonial rule, the American visitor to the

island is confronted with an endless vista of contradictions.

- Away from the tourist strip in San Juan, even in major metropolitan areas like Mayaguez or Ponce, an English-speaking tourist is hard-pressed to find someone to ask for directions, yet the Barnes & Noble bookstore outlet in the Sears shopping mall in Mayaguez is crammed with English-language books. Only one badly stocked shelf carries a sign saying "Spanish and foreign-language books."

- Though students at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez struggle with spoken English, thanks to a perfunctory exposure to the language in public schools, many of their courses at the college level are actually taught in the foreign tongue of the colonial metropole. Most of the textbooks and volumes in the university library also are in English.

- El Moro, the 16th-century fortress guarding the harbor of San Juan whose rifle turrets have been a favored symbol of the island on promotional travel brochures, is the property of the U.S. National Parks Service.

- Most homes in the suburbs outside Ponce have orange or grapefruit trees in their yards and chickens on their lawns, yet the giant supermarkets in town offer expensive imported citrus from California and Florida and chickens from Delaware at prices much higher than in the states. For the Puerto Rican consumer, "American" is often better by definition, if not by logic.

Yet beneath all of the superficial contradictions and the peculiar economic and social dislocations of colonialism, Puerto Rico has a vibrant national culture that is all its own, even after nearly a century of American influence. Despite the occasional

Christmas tree and home festooned in holiday lighting, Puerto Rican children don't wake to presents from Santa on December 25. Rather, on the night of January 5, they decorate shoeboxes, fill them carefully with grass, and expectantly await the arrival of the three Magi, who feed the grass to their camels and repay the kindness with presents found under beds the next morning.

Puerto Rico is a place where political convictions are so passionately held that most bars display signs banning politics as a topic of conversation. Yet on the night of January 5, islanders wander from house to house waking friends and neighbors of all political persuasions in a boisterous custom known as Paranda. It is on such an excursion that the truth of a popular saying, "After three drinks a statehooder talks like an *independentista*," is demonstrated.

Variations on theme: Indeed, economic issues aside, there is an underlying nationalistic motivation to each status option. For *independentistas*, the cultural issue is paramount. Supporters of commonwealth also argue passionately that to preserve Puerto Rican culture they must oppose statehood for the island; they object to independence primarily out of

fear that it will spell economic ruin. But even the statehooders—those whose only motive isn't a bigger welfare check—are themselves nationalists on one level.

For those who consider independence to mean economic collapse and political dictatorship, statehood is the only dignified escape from a colonialism that insults a proud culture—a culture that has survived five decades of deliberate oppression by U.S. colonial authorities and another four decades of a relatively benign immersion in the metropolitan commercial culture. (This latter period has been accompanied by a constant campaign of harassment and intimidation of *independentistas*.)

There are indications this year that Puerto Rico's tortuous journey through Spanish and then American colonialism may be approaching an end. One sign is an apparent willingness of at least some ardent statehooders to consider an alternative. As questions about America's willingness to accept a *jibaro*, or peasant, state grow, one increasingly hears the statement, "If Congress rejects statehood, I'll vote for independence."

Dave Lindorff is a New York-based freelance writer.

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C A L E N D A R

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NEW YORK

February 14-20

THE NEW YORK MARXIST SCHOOL
LEFT GREEN PERSPECTIVES IN EUROPE AND THE U.S.—Michael Hoexter and Hal Sirowitz; Wednesday, Feb. 14; 8 p.m.; \$5.
BOOK PARTY FOR THE GREEN DREAM, plus selected readings by author Olga Carbral-Friday, Feb. 16; 7 p.m.; \$5.
IN CONCERT: GUY KLUCEVSEK—Saturday, Feb. 17; 8 p.m.; \$6.
TULI KUPFERBERG AND THE FUXONS, poetry—Sunday, Feb. 18; 3 p.m.; \$6.
A NEW EUROPE: PERESTROIKA FOR WHOM?—Joel Krieger and Mark Kesselman; Monday, Feb. 19; 8 p.m.; \$5.

Unless otherwise noted, all events take place at the New York Marxist School, 79 Leonard St., New York, NY 10011, (212) 941-0332.

February 16-18

"IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT...AND WE FEEL FINE." Democratic Socialists of America Youth Section Winter Conference will be held at Columbia University. Workshops and speakers will focus on political strategies for the '90s. For information: DSA-Youth Section, 15 Dutch St., #500, New York, NY 10038, (212) 962-0390.

ATLANTA, GA

February 16-19

The Third Annual Black Gay & Lesbian Conference "Celebrating Our History, Casting Our Future," featuring the Third Annual Health Institute and the Leadership Roundtable, will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 265 Peachtree Street NE. Featured speakers include Keith St. John and Barbara Smith. Workshops featuring such topics as living with AIDS, politics in the '90s, substance abuse, internalized homophobia, co-dependency and relationship abuse are scheduled. LAVENDER LIGHT will conduct a gospel workshop. To register and for more information: Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 3924 W. Sunset Blvd, Suite 1, Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 666-5495.

CHICAGO

February 18

IMPACT, Chicago's Gay & Lesbian Political Action Committee, will host its Third Annual Dinner and invites you to share in their commitment for political change. At the Chicago Hilton & Towers, 720 S. Michigan Ave. Ticket prices: \$125 & \$250; black tie optional. Contact IMPACT, 2835 N. Sheffield, Suite 209, Chicago, IL 60657, (312) 880-2409 for more information.

February 25

For 40 years the journal *MONTHLY REVIEW*, founded by Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy, has represented independent and non-dogmatic socialist thinking. Readers and reporters of *MONTHLY REVIEW* in

Chicago have formed a new discussion group, which meets at the New World Resource Center Bookstore, 1476 Irving Park Road. The group looks at a variety of topics covered in the journal that are timely for socialists today. This month's meeting, held Sunday, Feb. 25 at 2 p.m., features the topic: "Media Bias—Techniques for Dealing with the Media" discussed by Alan Bickley, WBBM announcer, author and lecturer. Co-sponsored by the Open University for the Left and the New World Resource Center. For more information contact Perry Cartwright, 2620 Jackson Drive, Woodridge, IL 60517, (708) 971-2620.

BOSTON

February 21

"Cultural Literacy" talk by Christopher Hitchens of *The Nation* and *Harper's* at 8 p.m., Boston University, 705 Commonwealth Ave., Room 211. FREE. For more information, (617) 353-5389.

NATIONWIDE

March 1-20

"THE GREAT AMERICAN MEATOUT." Starting on March 1, join thousands of celebrities and other caring folks. Ask your friends and neighbors to "kick the meat habit" on March 20 (first day of Spring) and to explore a less violent and more wholesome diet. Contact: FARM ANIMAL REFORM MOVEMENT, 10101 Ashburton Lane, Bethesda, MD 20817, (301) 530-1737.

DENVER

March 23-24

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH LEGACIES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS PRODUCTION. Physicians for Social Responsibility's National Meeting will examine the radioactive and toxic threats to our health and environment caused by years of nuclear weapons production. Speakers include Bernard Lown, M.D.; Alice Stewart, M.D.; and Charles Clement, M.D.. Norman Cousins is the recipient of the 1990 PSR award. For more information contact PSR, 1000 16th St. NW, #810, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 785-3777.

WASHINGTON, DC

March 24

Commemorate the assassination of Archbishop Romero and March to End the U.S. War in Central America. Assemble at 11 a.m. and march from the U.S. Capitol to the White House. A rally will be staged at the White House, followed by non-violent civil disobedience. Marches will also take place in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Austin, Texas. Co-sponsored by CISPES, SANE/Freeze, Nicaraguan Network, Pledge of Resistance, U.S. Student Association, United Church of Christ, Pax Christi USA, National Rainbow Coalition and many others. For more information, call (202) 265-0890, 328-4040 or 223-2328.

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C L A S S I F I E D S

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FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION, 75-year-old religious, pacifist organization, seeks **DEPARTMENT COORDINATOR** responsible for fundraising/membership development strategy through direct mail, personal solicitation, etc. Demonstrated ability in fundraising, familiarity with direct mail, planned giving programs. Apply by April 1, 1990. Minorities and women encouraged. Send resume to Fran Levin, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights (CCDBR), a grassroots lobbying and educational organization concerned with First Amendment rights, is seeking a full-time Executive Director. Experience in management and fundraising in the non-profit sector is required. Send resume to: Search Committee, CCDBR, 220 S. State St., #1430, Chicago, IL 60604.

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Call It Sleep, Louis Harap. Single issue: \$2 plus 75¢ postage. Subscription: \$20 yearly (USA). **JEWISH CURRENTS**, Dept. T, Suite 601, 22 E. 17 St., NYC 10003-3272.

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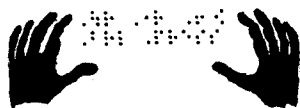
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Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser

Directed by Charlotte Zwerin

By Dean Robbins

I was hoping the documentary *Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser* could shed some light on Thelonious Monk. Monk is the Great Sphinx of jazz history—a sly genius hiding behind dark sunglasses, his piano tuned to the dissonances in his soul. His music, as eccentric as the man himself, was too far out for audiences of the '40s and '50s. His compositions (with impenetrable names like "Epistrophy" and "Rhythm-a-ning") finally found a following in the '60s, and Monk became famous enough to warrant a *Time* cover story. But in the early '70s he dropped from the scene, keeping to himself until his death in 1982.

Straight, No Chaser grew out of a chance encounter. In 1968, Monk was filmed for a German TV special that aired once then disappeared. It was forgotten until 1981, when one of the original filmmakers ran into producer Bruce Ricker. Ricker got hold of the footage and, along with director Charlotte Zwerin, added contemporary interviews and other archival tidbits to create a feature-length documentary.

Monk, a recluse: The mystery, it seemed, was going to be solved. Monk would be revealed to a mass audience.

Well, sort of. *Straight, No Chaser* is a fascinating portrait, but it doesn't bring us much closer to Monk than we already were. For all the interviews with his friends and family, the candid footage in airports and recording studios, and even the drawling testimony of the maestro himself, Monk remains—like his song titles—inscrutable. We must be content to watch him and make our best guess.

But don't underestimate the pleasure of watching. Monk is an astonishing camera subject—a big bear of a man with wiggly hats and a mischievous smile. At the piano, he slaps and jabs at the keys, his fingers splayed and his mouth gaping in fearful concentration. After his solo, he rises for a strange dance, which appears to be an extension of the music's herky-jerky rhythm.

It also appears to be Monk's way of shutting out the world. One haunting moment in *Straight, No Chaser* comes when Monk does his little dance in the middle of an airport. The camera follows him as he spins in slow circles, oblivious to other passengers ducking out of his way.

Is he crazy, or just kidding? The filmmakers let the footage stand without comment. Later, we draw our own conclusions when Thelonious Monk Jr. reveals that his dad was hospitalized for depression, and when Monk's manager, Harry Colomby, describes a bout of "strange behavior" during Monk's interview with *Time* magazine.

Behind every hipster: The movie's real revelation is the pained, nervous faces of these interviewees. Thelonious Jr. says he was tempted to run from Monk but was told by Nellie, his mom, that he had to look out for his dad every minute. Nellie herself is a poignant figure in the archival footage, her sensible clothes and cat-eye glasses a sharp contrast to Monk's hipster outfit. She bustles around him in a hotel room, helping when he's unable to put on his clothes.

This, apparently, is the untold story behind Monk's masterpieces. He spun his quirky circles; Nellie and the others caught him when he fell.

These scenes reveal the tragic side of Thelonious Monk, but they don't rob him of his dignity. In that regard, *Straight, No Chaser* is a cut above Hollywood hatchet jobs like *Bird* and *Round Midnight*. These films indulged every cliché about maladjusted black musicians without providing any social context. By contrast, *Straight, No Chaser* balances the image of Monk's helplessness by acknowledging his extraordinary courage in a racist society.

**new
documentary
offers an
alternative take
on the fragile
genius of
Thelonious Monk.**

His manager, for example, is interviewed on Monk's militancy. Monk was a leader of the bebop movement, a powerful expression of black discontent in the '40s and '50s. His uncompromising music (along with his openly idiosyncratic behavior) was a bold declaration of independence. Monk wasn't an Uncle Tom who entertained on whitey's terms—he was an artist who demanded respect for his talent. He never backed down, even if it meant laboring in obscurity.

Monk finally won respect from audiences and critics, and he wins it all over again in the documentary's live performances (some of which are included in the excellent Columbia soundtrack album). On "Just a Gigolo" and "I Mean You," he wrenches lyricism from the most jagged rhythms and discordant harmonies. This "ugly beauty" (as he calls one composition) is the expression of a thoroughly original musical personality.

So what's the connection between Monk's musical personality and the one that scared his own son? *Straight, No Chaser* provides no answers. But it does allow us to say, along with one polite woman in the film who seeks the master's autograph in a foreign airport, "Long live Thelonious Monk."

Dean Robbins is a writer and critic living in Madison, Wis.

